

Beyond occupational choice : a study of gendered transitions

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Abstract

The transition from education to the labour market is a constant theme for sociological investigation, but the study of occupational choice itself has occupied a peripheral place in the theory and research literature for the past two decades. Of particular concern here, neither extant theories of occupational choice nor the contemporary youth studies literature offer satisfactory accounts of the patterns of girls' aspirations and the social processes in which these are embedded. It is argued here that occupational choice processes are a critical switch in the social reproduction of gender relations. Specifically situated subjects construct a transitions biography from a range of legitimated and concretely available alternatives. The possibilities are specified through the terms of gender discourse which, in describing the confluence of circumstances and understandings, represents the social space in which girls are positioned and position themselves across time. A model of the modalities of gender relations is developed and explored through a study of primarily working class girls aged 11-14 and 14-16 between 1983-1986 who were attending three inner London comprehensives. The data were collected by cross-sectional survey (N=169) and interview (N=61) and by longitudinal interview (N=37). These girls see occupational structure in highly gendered and partial terms, corresponding to the specific social worlds they inhabit. Over time, perspectives and aspirations focus increasingly on female-typed jobs. Within this, their expectations reflect what is judged realistically available. Such processes of gendered closure are modified by educational achievement and by schooling milieu in relation with family and cultural context. Subject specialisation fixes the course of these processes, since options are generally chosen with current aspiration/expectation in mind. In sum, gendered transitions across the secondary schooling years are shaped not only institutionally but also socially and culturally by girls' personal attempts to resolve the contradictory puzzle of production/reproduction relations under modern patri-

archy and in the light of the resources at their disposal. Most trajectories inevitably prefigure accommodative arrangements and do not threaten social reproduction processes, but this does not imply non-critical and automatic consent. The potential for critical consciousness is fostered by various cross-pressures in the specific configurations of girls' lives, but the partial insights they open up are held in check both ideologically and through social-educational selection/allocation.

Acknowledgements

This thesis has eaten selfishly into the lives of those I hold dear, and I shall always remember that they have neither deserted me nor resented my preoccupation and absences, both literal and metaphorical. They are many to name, and I doubt they would wish the publicity, but they are all between the lines of what I shall ever write.

My colleagues at the Institute of Education have had to bear with an increasingly harassed and impatient bundle of nervous exhaustion, at a time when their own energies are stretched to breaking point in the current policy and resources climate. Diana Leonard, Janet Maw and Charles Posner have each, in their own inimitable ways, been enormously supportive. There are also those colleagues beyond the Institute for whom I have considerable respect, and who have each, in different ways, given me confidence to continue this work: Wilfried Breyvogel, Helga Krüger, David Jenkins, Dieter Renz and Valerie Walkerdine. I would like to record my thanks to the GAOC team, too, for the energies they invested in the project: Shane Blackman, Tuula Gordon, Janet Holland and Jean McNeil. Finally, Steve Huston's skilled work on the typescript and tables has relieved me of many hours in front of the screen, for which I am very thankful. The Post-Sixteen Education Centre was, as ever, generous with its excellent computer resources. Michael Klenke's graphics studio provided the last waltz.

Paul Atkinson has written* of Basil Bernstein as dogged by a *Doppelgänger*: the demon of a mythology which embraces his work and his person. As mentor and critic, Basil Bernstein is frequently demonic and his input anything but mythological, as those of us who have had the good fortune of his supervision know to our benefit. His intellectual and personal generosity are not, however, honoured as they should be. He takes a serious delight in other people's interesting ideas, to which he brings a formidable critical acumen and an admirable commitment to a job of work. I owe him an eternal debt of gratitude, and not only for his supervision of an awkward customer. A figure of Basil Bernstein's stature has no need of my underwriting of his qualities, but I had need of his underwriting of mine. I hope he will think that the investment was worth it.

*in Language, Structure and Reproduction Methuen, London, 1985, pp.16-18

Contents

	<i>pages</i>
Prolegomena	8
Introduction	10
1 Restructuring the weft: a selective review	19
1.1 The division of labour by sex: sociohistorical perspectives	20
1.2 Gender, skills and vocation	29
1.3 Girls and transitions: choices and circumstances	37
2 The modalities of gender relations: a general model	52
2.1 Perspectives and life-plans	53
2.2 The nature of the model	61
2.3 Cultural semantics, gender locations and dynamics	69
2.3.1 The field of femininity and its occupational translations	69
2.3.2 Gender locations: an initial classification	75
2.3.2.1 Gender locations: a brief discussion	81
2.3.3 The dynamics of the 'gendered career'	83
2.4 Concluding remarks	89
3 The sample: social and educational context	94
3.1 Research design and sampling	94
3.2 The schools: brief portraits	99
3.2.1 Wilhelma	99
3.2.2 Dame's Trust	101
3.2.3 Sternrise	103
3.3 The girls' parents	105
3.3.1 Parents' jobs	105
3.3.2 Discussion	114
3.4 Siblings: occupations and school-work transitions	117
3.4.1 Education and training beyond 16	118
3.4.2 Siblings' jobs	120
3.4.3 Discussion	123

4 The modalities of gender relations: an empirical exploration	129
4.1 The analysis of the interview data	130
4.2 Gender locations: case studies	137
4.2.1 Non-transforming positions	138
4.2.2 Potentially transforming positions	142
4.2.3 Transitional locations	150
4.2.4 Non-transforming resolutions	155
4.2.5 Intersections between gender, ethnicity and class	157
4.3 Gender locations: pattern types	161
4.3.1 Social origins and locations	162
4.3.2 Resources and role models	164
4.3.3 Understandings of the social world	166
4.3.3.1 The division of labour by sex	168
4.3.3.2 Awareness and consciousness of gender divisions	171
4.3.4 Educational-occupational realisations	174
4.4 Gender divisions and emancipatory change	177
5 Perspectives, aspirations and expectations: occupational worlds and gendered futures	185
5.1 The sample and the data	185
5.2 Occupational worlds	187
5.2.1 The joblists as data	188
5.2.2 Perceptions of occupational structure	190
5.3 Gendered futures	199
5.3.1 Job aspirations and expectations: the survey data	199
5.3.2 Job aspirations and expectations over time: the interview data	206
5.4 Occupational semantics and gender discourse	209

6 Gender and the management of transitions	221
6.1 Unfolding transitions: patterns and trajectories	222
6.2 Vulnerable transitions: case studies	238
6.2.1 Discussion	242
6.3 Endangered transitions: case studies	248
6.3.1 Discussion	252
6.4 Promising transitions: case studies	254
6.4.1 Discussion	258
6.5 Well-managed transitions: case studies	262
6.5.1 Discussion	268
6.6 Unfolding transitions: concluding commentary	271
 Conclusions	 283
 Appendices	
I Perspectives on occupational choice: a brief note	301
II The interview sample: aliases and case numbers	307
III The interview schedule and the interviewing context	308
IV The survey instruments	315
V The working universe of occupations	319
VI A map of girls' aspirations	323
VII Episode cards: an exemplar set	324
 References	 329

Prolegomena

Anatomieren magst du die Sprache, doch nur ihr Kadaver;
Geist und Leben entschlüpft flüchtig dem groben Skalpell.

(You may well be able to dissect the language, but only its corpse;

Life and soul fleet before the crude scalpel.)

Goethe, Xenien, 1796

Are the terms occupation, career and vocation effective synonyms for each other, their practiced interchangeability in everyday usage meaningless? In seeking to comprehend the realities and meanings of young adolescent girls' biographies, I found myself continually irritated by a common elision of terms applied within the complex of education-employment transitions. It was this nagging irritation which ultimately shaped the form of this thesis, turning it into an exploration of the contextualisation of girls' occupational choices within patterns of social and cultural reproduction. The view taken here is that understanding occupational choice processes and gender is material to an understanding of the processes of social and cultural reproduction, both in a purely theoretical sense and as an exemplar of the ways people must actively come to terms with structural and ideological constraints and possibilities.

The interplay between structure and agency at critical points of transition has formed one axis of orientation in the work presented here. A second impulse arose from the evident need to locate structures of meaning lying behind *what* girls said, they wanted to be and *how* they formulated and explained these aspirations and expectations. A failure to question these surface patterns has contributed to the poverty of occupational 'choice' theory when faced with the task of understanding gendered patterns of choices and destinations.

This study claims only to have begun to explore how these meanings and practices are constructed and reconstructed in girls' lives. Goethe's critique of the grammarians is well-taken; yet the exercise of life and soul requires a bodily anchor, at least in this known existence. My aspiration, however, is that sociological rigor mortis has not won the day.

Introduction

Neither the *facts* of women's disadvantaged labour market position, nor the *general view* that gender inequalities are linked with a dual oppression of women both in the family and in employment, are in dispute. Beyond such very general statements, however, there lies considerable disagreement about the precise nature and significance of these linkages for processes of social and cultural reproduction and change. Unidimensional explanations are clearly insufficient, but most writers concur that occupational segregation by sex represents a key link in the reproduction of gender inequalities. Consequently, since the mid-seventies research and policy energy has been invested into trying to sever that link by attempting to manipulate educational and occupational choices and destinations. Not surprisingly, much agitated debate has ensued about what such attempts imply, particularly since evidence of 'success' has to date been quantitatively meagre. We might have expected research attention to turn to more detailed study of gendered patterns of occupational choice in order to reach a better understanding of reproduction processes at a context-specific level. This has not noticeably taken place.

What is remarkable in scouring the literature is the paucity of sociological work which specifically aims to link education and employment by the *direct* study of gendered occupational choice processes. We can find writing which treats adolescents' choices as outcomes of educational and general socialisation processes - but the link is assumed rather than worked through, the approaches typically static and retrospective. An abundant literature investigates women's position in particular occupations - once they are already located in such spaces. Another (sparser) strand takes an occupation itself as the starting-point, tracing the processes of acquisition and changes in the occupation's 'gender' and exploring the details of such gendered status. We can also locate macro-analyses of social reproduction processes, in which

occupational aspirations and expectations are but interim and relatively unproblematic indicators of those processes actually occurring (or not, as the case may be). It is as if the matter of occupational choice evades our grasp, and this must, in some way, reflect the enormously significant dividing line which is drawn between education and work: occupational choice sits on the interface, straddles the chasm. Fundamentally, the study of occupational choice is a marginal endeavour - institutionally, culturally, and within sociological analysis.

Beyond these general remarks, it is well-known that the 'conventional' literature is weighted towards white middle-class (and more recently, working-class) males both in terms of empirical focus and as a baseline for theoretical explanation. In addition, this literature inclines either to the over-voluntaristic or to the over-mechanistic. Such problematic features of existing models of occupational choice have been long since exposed. It is, then, less useful to rehearse the evident sex-blindness or simple inadequacy of such models than it is to cull the insights they (perhaps accidentally) reveal about the balance of structure and agency in shaping choice processes. It cannot be accidental that the *direct* study of occupational choice had ground to a halt by the early seventies. It seems that despite having recognised the difficulties of existing models, sociologists were unable to proceed beyond straightforward situationally determinist explanations - for in radical theory, occupational choices appear as nothing more than logical interim outcomes along the road to social reproduction. Arising from studies of youth cultural transitions and of the youth unemployment crisis, a newer literature has since emerged to map fresh terrains and perspectives. These studies are related to, but are not precisely about, occupational choice processes; they cannot be described as simply sex-blind, although empirical referents and analytic focus remain disproportionately male and white - and increasingly concerned with class fractions rather than simple middle:working class distinctions. Together with socio-historical studies and

explicitly feminist analyses of women's work, this more recent literature (which is selectively reviewed in Chapter 1) offers a broader empirical and more sophisticated analytical base from which to regenerate theoretical perspectives on occupational choice.

All studies dealing with girls and adolescent transitions attest with varying degrees of frustration that the occupations to which girls *overtly aspire* are narrow and stereotypical in range. The more insightful writers distinguish between childhood and adolescence, showing how the realities of gender divisions and the labour market impact increasingly negatively on girls' *expectations*. Girls gradually narrow down both their aspirations and their expectations into gender-appropriate categories, on the basis of realistic observations and actual experiences. Explanations which effectively blame the victims are *prima facie* unsatisfactory, but it remains the case that a very few occupations persistently dominate the expressions of the consequences of these *channelling processes*. This suggests, *inter alia*, that such occupations are symbolically heavily redolent. What do these occupations symbolise? What role might they play in the social reproduction of gender relations as repositories of cultural meaning sets?

In the first instance, they act as gender reproduction 'magnets'. In the second instance, they trap girls into an ideological cul-de-sac which ultimately turns out to be only too real. The nature of these 'restricted horizons' is such that, once caught up in their bann, more 'successfully instrumental' or even 'potentially transforming' selection and decisionmaking processes are stifled, slowed down and deflected. This leaves girls, in real terms, extremely vulnerable on the transitions market at 16-plus. The magnetising power of these few occupations is extraordinarily high, overriding their objective lesser attractiveness in extrinsic and instrumental terms. To teachers and advisors, girls often *appear* frustratingly and remarkably immune

both to the experiences of adult women in their communities and to the information or advice they are offered.

There are a number of perfectly objective labour market and employer-related reasons why girls are crowded into a narrow range of occupational spaces. The strength of these magnets in girls' voiced aspirations (i.e. what they generally state they 'want to be') nevertheless requires some independent sociological explanation at a more sophisticated level than simple reference to sex-role socialisation and normative behaviour. Explanations of occupational choice have satisfied themselves too readily with outcomes rather than processes; they have paid too little attention to the multi-dimensionality of the social distribution of chances. What are the alternatives actually available to girls living and growing up in particular social and cultural circumstances? How do they come to terms with the fact that available resolutions to the dilemmas of gendered transitions are objectively limited and largely accommodative? Where potentially transforming resolutions are available and provisionally adopted, how do such girls 'maintain the line' of resistance? It is this set of problems that I am here concerned to pursue.

Following on from this introduction, the thesis is ordered into seven chapters. As noted earlier, Chapter 1 presents a selective review of that literature which, in my view, offered empirical and analytical 'clues' in the attempt to regenerate the study of occupational choice. It does not pretend to be exhaustive of the field(s) whose literature(s) might be thought relevant, for three reasons. Firstly, the 'conventional' literature which deals directly with occupational choice is theoretically and empirically outdated, and it has been thoroughly critiqued already. Appendix I draws together the main issues involved here, as an optional backdrop to the chapter's starting-point. Secondly, once we move beyond a narrowly defined literature relevant to occupational choice, the range of potentially fruitful topic areas immedi-

ately expands alarmingly. Thirdly, this thesis did not begin as a blank slate, but rather represents a stage in the development of my thinking across a number of years and a range of research activity. Both of these factors led naturally to a selection from a wide range of possibilities in relation to an existing line of inquiry. Chapter 1 has, therefore, four sections, which consecutively build a basis for the plausibility of the theoretical approach taken in this thesis. The first section takes up the discussion by reflecting upon what socio-historical studies of the social division of labour can tell us about the interplay between gender, class, production and reproduction in western European social structure and tradition. The second section focuses upon a core issue arising from that initial discussion - the relationships between gender, skills and the concept of vocation. In the third section, attention turns to recent studies of the culture of femininity in adolescence and their implications for gendered occupational choice processes. Finally, the last section reviews those few contemporary studies which have specifically or indirectly addressed themselves to the question of gendered youth transitions in a holistic manner.

Chapter 2 sets out the general model of the modalities of gender relations which arises through and hence informs the empirical analysis in this thesis. Essentially, the theoretical problem lay less in that existing models of occupational choice have little explanatory power (especially in relation to gender). We could argue that this is the case (and I do so elsewhere, cf. Appendix I), but the more relevant issue is that the seams they uncover have been worked out. The model developed through this thesis does not claim universality; but it is described as general in the sense that its relevance is not *in principle* restricted to girls, nor to occupational choice as an operative field. In other words, there is no reason to suppose that the model as mapped here would operate *in the same ways* for boys, whose social biographies are materially and normatively differently constituted. In principle, however, it would be possible and perhaps fruitful to apply a similar analytic framework in studying

processes of occupational choice for boys, though its axes and dynamics would certainly be dissimilar from those which apply for girls. This thesis is centrally concerned with the exploration of a model, an approach towards studying gendered youth transitions which developed in an interactive process between theory formation and empirical analysis. It began with a deep irritation at the way in which available models of occupational 'choice' (or, occupational 'placement') and studies of adolescent girls in transition simply did not 'speak' to each other. In this sense, the thesis aims not to 'prove' a set of tenets, but rather to establish a way of speaking about occupational choice that makes sociological sense.

Chapters 3 to 6 inclusive present the empirical analysis and findings. Data drawn from the Girls and Occupational Choice (GAOC) project⁽¹⁾, a cross-sectional and longitudinal study of predominantly working-class and female pupils in Greater London and aged 11-16 between 1983-86, are used to investigate occupational choice processes within the framework of gendered transitions. Two sources of material are included : questionnaire survey data in quantitative form, and in-depth semi-structured interview data in qualitative form. The quantitative data provide an aggregate description of the ways in which girls perceive and understand the occupational structure and the labour market, both in general terms and as accessible to them and their communities. The relative emphasis lies, however, in the use of the qualitative data. These serve the purpose of mapping and tracing locations and trajectories adopted and pursued by respondents in their construction of a *transition biography* across the secondary schooling years.

Chapter 3, prefaced with a description of the sample, places the girls in their social and educational contexts. Brief portraits of the three schools the girls attended follow, which indicate their similarities and differences as social-educational environments. On the basis of the information gained in the interviews, social-familial

contexts are then described by an analysis of parental employment and occupations, and of the experiences of elder siblings in their transitions to employment and adult life. Chapter 4 uses the interview material to explore and illustrate the typology of *gender locations* (as presented in Chapter 2). It opens with a description of the principles and method of analysis developed for this dataset. As realised through specialised locations which are contingent upon recognisable features of girls' social worlds and their interpretations of these, the modalities of gender relations are empirically mapped and then illustrated with case-studies. The analysis is drawn together firstly, by considering the *intersections* between gender, ethnicity and class as experienced by the girls in this study and, secondly, by identifying production/reproduction *relations* as the key axis in understanding gender divisions. Chapter 5 widens and changes the empirical base by looking at girls' aspirations and expectations in the light of their perspectives of occupational structure, (primarily) using survey data separately collected in the schools and forms from which the interview sample was drawn. Chapter 6 returns to the interview data, this time that arising from a three-stage sequence of interviews conducted between 1984 and 1986 for a sub-sample of girls in two age-groups. Its purpose is to identify and trace different kinds of gendered trajectories as these unfold either in the three years leading up to school subject specialisation or in the two years that follow, the last phase of compulsory schooling.

The conclusions summarise the findings and critically reflect upon the approach taken towards gender and occupational choice processes, suggesting lines for future research. For the present, I would wish simply to reiterate the view that occupational choices have a material, but also a symbolic significance, both of which are embedded in the historically specific contexts in which young people move from childhood towards adulthood. A focus on the processes of transition in which occupational choices are anchored offers access to dimensions of active struggles within struct-

ured contradictions that operate at the very interface of two major arenas of social and cultural reproduction : education and work. This interface simply has to act as a nervecentre, a site which combines both the strength and the vulnerability of the structures and processes of that reproduction. At the same time, placing gender at the centre of attention forces us to consider how *interactive* principles of social division work together through youth transitions to (largely) ensure reproduction rather than transformation.

Occupational choice, then, is a critical switch for the reproduction of gender relations. Its significance can be profitably analysed in terms of symbolic meanings and real practices, framed by material conditions but not adequately uncovered by simple and direct reference to these. The principles which structure gendered transitions operate to transpose and represent the contradictory realities of girls' and women's lives in ways which favour accommodation (or non-productive resistance) rather than productive deconstruction or potential transformation. These principles articulate flexibly with with those regulating the reproduction of other forms of social divisions; in this thesis, we shall glimpse some of those articulations with class divisions, and, more sketchily but, it is argued, of central importance, with race/ethnic divisions. Such flexible articulations comprise and express dialectical tensions of greater or lesser moment at given times and in given contexts, thus offering differently located groups of girls greater or lesser *space* for transformation at an individual level. In other words, they frame the ranges of positions and resolutions available. However, although gendered transitions (as exemplified through occupational choice processes in this case) are dominated by socially reproductive channelling processes, their guiding principles are generative: individuals are active performing subjects, too. Girls' voiced occupational choices - what they say they want to be at any one time - are, then, snapshots of resolutions-in-progress. The perspective developed here opens up a crucial discussion: it suggests that the

potentially transforming power of breaking occupational segregation by sex is contained, in tandem, by the ideological power of the culture of sacrificial femininity and by the material structures of capitalist patriarchy. In the struggles that young women face at the intersection of education and work, most remain *trapped in their vocation*. They become 'women' - and in so doing, ensure the social reproduction of gender relations.

Footnotes

1 The GAOC project was funded between 1983 and 1988 by the SSRC/ESRC (personal research grants F00232036, F00232203) with additional support from the EOC, from the ILEA Equal Opportunities Unit, and from the University of London Institute of Education Research Fund. The writer was the grant holder and principal investigator; those working with the project included, for varying periods and in a range of capacities, Francis Bernstein, Shane Blackman, Tuula Gordon, Mary Hickman, Janet Holland, Celia Jenkins, Jean McNeil, and numbers of teachers in the project schools (who perforce must remain anonymous to preserve the confidentiality of the study).

1 Restructuring the weft: a selective review

Occupational choice theories were framed for men. The pivotal notion is that individuals have free rein to follow their inclinations. The theories do not recognise the major limitations placed on women by their early socialisation and by sex-structuring of the labour force, with the result that women perceive only a narrow range of alternatives. (Angrist and Almquist, 1975, pp.144-5)

This succinct verdict was accurate in the mid-seventies, and it remains so at the close of the eighties. In the interim, theory and research into occupational choice processes have stagnated. A comprehensive review of the 'conventional' literature is thus an unprofitable way into the questions addressed in this thesis.⁽¹⁾ This chapter's discussion aims to begin afresh, by selective review of a wider literature. However, in neither the sociology of youth transitions nor of gender divisions - the most relevant related fields - has the topic of occupational choice been addressed directly, in its own right. There is little virtue in conducting a comprehensive review here either; the literature has rather served the purpose of charting orientation points, gathering clues, and extracting puzzle pieces for the development and grounding of an argument. This chapter rehearses that process by offering a thematically ordered account of the contributing literature, from which particular threads are selected and carried through. We begin, firstly, with socio-historical studies of the division of labour by sex and then, secondly, continue with a consideration of the relationships between gender, skill and vocation. The final section looks at girls' occupational choices and their framing circumstances by drawing out relevant information from recent British qualitative studies of adolescent girls in general and of (gendered) youth transitions in particular.

The discussion as a whole directs our attention towards the centrality of the concept of *sacrificial femininity within the continuity of patriarchal relations* as structuring the

lives of all women. It equally argues that, within this framework, *women are specifically situated*. Their social positionings, and the cultural traditions associated with these, place them differently in relation to gendered discourses and practices. This is the basis for the model of *gender locations* which is the subject of Chapter 2. In their turn, these locations frame the spaces within which girls struggle between accommodation, resistance and potential transformation in the process of transition to 'womanhood'. Occupational choice processes are, then, one expression (amongst others) of the reproduction of gender relations. In this respect, we can see why the relevant broader literature has not necessarily seen the topic as independently important (see Appendix I). However, as argued in the Introduction, occupational choice - howsoever embedded in wider structures and processes - is not 'simply' an expression. It both actively realises and legitimates the production and reproduction of gender relations, whose occupational expressions are specified for different social, cultural and educational contexts.

1.1 The division of labour by sex: socio-historical perspectives

Bradley (1989) undoubtedly offers the fullest and most balanced review available to date of historical and sociological work on this topic. She was particularly interested in evaluating the debate over whether women's social position, especially in production, had deteriorated or (ultimately) improved as a consequence of industrialisation. She concludes that the immense complexity of the change processes involved make it difficult to reach firm generalised conclusions (ibid., p. 34). In reviewing similar literature for this study, my interest was to trace cultural continuities rather than to determine the effects of industrialisation on production/reproduction relations; I also sought indications of class-linked specificities in the patterns and understandings of the division of labour by sex. In doing so, I came to lean further towards what Bradley terms (after Middleton, 1985) the 'critical pessimists'

rather than the optimistic accounts of Pinchbeck (1930/1981) and Shorter (1976). (2) In other words, historically and relatively - but not uniformly, universally, or absolutely - some ground has been lost in terms of women's positioning and distribution in production. At the same time, the changing contexts of production/reproduction relations in which such shifts have taken place are of such complexity and specificity that we cannot extract any one element without the risk of distorting its meaning and real implications for women's lives.

The discussion here highlights particular strands of socio-historical argument and evidence relevant to my purpose. The intention here is to take up threads, not to muster the entire fabric. Yet interestingly, Bradley's (op. cit., Ch.2) exhaustive survey reaches conclusions which fit the pattern : firstly, *both* capitalisation *and* the break-up of family production are closely linked with shifts in the division of labour by sex and in 'occupational gender'. Secondly, the flexibility of the pre-industrial division of labour by sex offered a minority of women the opportunity to challenge patriarchal relations, a space which was subsequently lost. Thirdly, understandings of 'women's work' (and, of course, 'men's work') are heavily informed and regulated by culturally symbolic meaning systems which reach back over a long period of European history.

Power (1975) argues that in medieval England women were represented in a far wider range of trades than subsequently became the case; girls entered apprenticeships proper in greater numbers.(3) Nevertheless, exclusionary practices on the part of the craft guilds were increasingly ensuring that women's position in (non-agricultural) production was, on patriarchal terms, safely circumscribed. Women generally officially worked in the crafts and trades as assistants to their husbands or fathers. However, it was acceptable practice for women who were widowed or who (unusually) remained single to be taken into full membership of the guild to which

their deceased husband or father had belonged. Their inheritance entitled them to practice their trade as '*femmes soles*', on the same terms as men.

Allowances made for such 'special cases' could never have opened the way for a real challenge to patriarchal relations by creating the conditions for women's economic independence from and competition with men. Pahl (1984) concludes that individuals of both sexes were in practice obliged to be members of households. Pre-industrial patterns of work were not feasible unless carried out within the household: the economic unit of production, reproduction, distribution and consumption. Individuals would simply find it very difficult to survive alone. Whilst households probably varied considerably in composition, the basic glue was provided by a marriage relationship whose *essential* nature was that of a social and economic contract.

In other words, women and men who were not integrated into a household, whether through their own marriage or via kin relations, were detached from the social contract which regulated everyday economic life. But the consequences of integration were quite different for women, since in all household structures they were legally and normatively placed under the authority of a man to whom they were formally socially related. The only loophole was an economically self-sufficient all-female household, which explains the social pressures to remarry that were placed upon widows. (The available evidence indicates that affluent widows did generally remarry, though they did not need to do so, and thereby lost their legal independence once more.) In broad terms, women's position in production seems to be characterised by strong historical continuities: its scope and its nature has been circumscribed and regulated in order to protect men's economic power and their domination of the labour market. However, this is not enough to secure the maintenance of patriarchal relations: the intergenerational inheritance of wealth

and property requires control both of production and of reproduction. Women's labour power, but also their fertility (and hence sexuality), must be placed at the disposal of their male kin. The integration of women into mixed-sex households achieves both.

On the other hand, Power (op.cit.) proposes that *practically* speaking women operated on reasonably equal terms with their menfolk. As the mistress of the household, women in affluent circumstances enjoyed considerable status and power as 'chief executives' of what were large-scale economic enterprises, especially where husbands were absent for long periods on political and military errands. However, only *one* woman per household could enjoy such a role; the rest were formally subordinate, just as they would have been to a male chief of staff. The mistress of the household was always second-in-command, at best representing her own boss. The majority of women, of course, were in a quite different position. Their 'rough and ready' equality derived from their centrality both as productive workers and as domestic managers for the economic survival and reproductive maintenance of a small subsistence unit.

This kind of interpretation can be carried beyond plausible limits. Pahl (op.cit.) argues forcefully that until quite recently (at an indeterminate point somewhere after industrialisation) husband-wife relations could be described as an effectively equal partnership, and especially in the labouring classes. Women's and men's tasks within what he terms 'household work strategies' varied locally and across time with extant social and material conditions. Admitting his evidence to be scanty, Pahl suggests that men were much more involved in domestic labour and childcare than they have come to be since the nineteenth century. He argues, for example, that until the seventeenth century, jobs like domestic cleaning were not *ideologically* viewed as women's work. Domestic cleaning appears to have been an intermittent activity

confined to affluent households, for which casual help was hired as needed. General housework (as we understand it) was a task allotted to servants and young girls of the household. Pahl's purpose here is to indicate the greater flexibility of the pre-industrial division of labour by sex. But in so doing, the *fact* that the hired cleaners were largely women and that the housework was largely delegated to subordinate females slips under the surface. In sum, then, we cannot relegate patriarchal relations to the status of a marginal irritation in the lives of pre-industrial women on the basis of the 'relatively privileged' position of some women and more weakly gendered task boundaries in household or market economies.

In contrast, Roberts' (1984) account of the lives of working-class women growing up in the north-west industrial borders of England between 1890 and 1940 never loses sight of the realities of patriarchal relations, although her purpose was to highlight positively the "power and achievements" of these ordinary women rather than explicitly to focus on patriarchy:

The oral evidence does not...suggest universal oppression of women within working-class marriages; indeed, in the great majority of marriages in the sample, the woman exerted significant power, not so much from legal rights as from moral force. Although the source of her power was moral, it could and did give her considerable economic control over the family...it was simply assumed that all earning children gave their wages to their mother for her to dispose of as she thought best. Similarly, 'good' husbands were expected to hand over their wages without any deductions having been made. (Roberts, 1984, p.110)

She found that wives-mothers exerted considerable decisionmaking power over, for example, when children should leave school and begin contributing to the household purse; whether daughters' labour was more useful in money or in kind; whether the household should move in search of better employment or accommodation. Where wives decided it was necessary for them to take paid work, husbands were obliged to take on some (variable amount of) domestic labour. (4)

Roberts nevertheless contextualises these findings within the framework of patriarchal relations. In the social world in which her respondents grew up, children quickly learned they were part of a working social and economic unit of which they, too, had to be active members. The first kind of work children came to know and do was, of course, domestic labour. In families with no daughters, sons were obliged to participate fully. Otherwise, it was girls who did *more than* their brothers, and it was girls to whom the tasks of *childcare, cooking and sewing* were allocated. The household supplied a learning-by-doing pedagogic context: both sexes knew how the division of labour between the sexes was practised and were early able to reproduce the patterns by differential skills acquisition. Girls could see that even though their mothers typically worked for wages in some way and for much of the time, the *responsibility* for household-family maintenance lay exclusively with women.

In effect, *girls were apprenticed to their mothers* and had acquired a considerable array of skills by the time they came onto the labour market between the ages of twelve and fourteen. By the end of the nineteenth century the labour market had become rigidly sex-segregated and exclusionist (see here Alexander, 1983, for a case study of London; Bradley (op.cit.) for a range of occupational case-studies). It is hardly surprising that Roberts' respondents sought to turn the domestic-based skills they already possessed to good use. These could bring a return not only in the form of waged work, but also as unpaid domestic labour in the household economy. Only a small minority of these women secured an apprenticeship or similar *in the market* (primarily in tailoring/ dressmaking or secretarial/ clerical). The vast majority went into domestic service, shopwork or the textile mills. (5) Allowing for regional differences in emphasis and larger-scale shifts (such as the decline of dressmaking), the continuities with today's working-class girls' occupational destinations are

self-evident.

If we now step back into pre-industrial England once more, Clark's study of seventeenth century working women

...stresses the complementarity of men's and women's activities,...where there was no rigid separation between home and work, and where a woman's place in the wider economy flowed inevitably from the skills she acquired in the domestic sphere...Many activities were interchangeable between the sexes, but...there was a separation of public and domestic spheres which reflected and reproduced deeper... divisions of influence and authority between women and men...The two spheres were separate and interdependent but the relationship between them was unequal; women's areas of influence and responsibility were subordinate to and controlled by men's...Working Life of Women is an account of the consequences of men's control over women's productive and reproductive lives. (Chaytor and Lewis, 1982, pp.33-35)

This summary encapsulates the puzzle of pre-industrial gender relations, in which the 'facts' of the matter are probably as clear as they ever will be - but which raises question marks about the relationships between material conditions, ideologies, and subjectivities. How was it that women's contribution could be recognised as of central, direct importance to the survival and prosperity of a household-based economy, yet still be ranked as subordinate - not only legally, but also in common-sense understandings of the world? In other words, independence and subordination existed in a curious juxtaposition to each other. (6) I can only propose there to have been *not only* a practical *but also* an ideological separation *within* patriarchal relations between what was legally and publicly the case (women's subordination) and what was actually and privately the case (sexual complementarity within a firmly circumscribed equality).

Exclusionary practices, restricting women to a narrow range of expression, are not solely of material significance. Women's exclusion from all religious office except in

strictly subordinate capacities offers an example : the reproduction and legitimation of hegemony falls into the classic province of the Church. Although a literally 'unthinkable' supposition, had women enjoyed full access to the highly-politicised and intellectualised medieval cloisters, they may have begun to understand what they 'actually did' differently from how women's activities were 'supposed' to be understood. Women's struggle for access to education - in this sense, a secular religion - has been interestingly described as follows:

...an elaborate system of symbolic boundaries was being broken down...women were stepping from a different and non-competitive world, and thus were polluting the values of both the world they left - the 'home' - and the world they entered. The reluctance to allow them to compete...demonstrated the importance of the symbolic separation between men's and women's worlds. (Marks, 1976, p.188)

The comment that education is a dangerous commodity because it may encourage people to start thinking more for themselves is trivial but apposite, even if we equally know that contemporary schooling inclines to reproduce rather than to weaken patriarchal relations. However: where the reproduction of femininity cannot be achieved by material restriction and exclusion, symbolic boundaries can be restaked to ensure that girls do not readily miss their vocation.

It is a matter for debate whether the transition to industrial capitalism can wholly account for the 'reconstitution' (in exacerbated form?) of women's subordination, and to what extent eighteenth century reformulations of religious and secular ideologies are accorded an indeterminately autonomous role in these changes. Feminist analyses of the relationships between capitalism and patriarchy adopt a variety of positions on the issue, and we do not need to detail the arguments here (but see Barratt, 1980/1989); Cockburn, 1986; Hartmann, 1976; Holland, 1985 ; Walby, 1986). I would simply make three points. Firstly, the historical subordination of

women in propertied/titled families makes a certain sort of *material* sense. It makes no sense whatsoever in the case of the labouring and peasant classes unless we give some credence to a specifically *ideological* hegemony. Secondly, the evident contradictions (we see) between actualities and meaning systems may not have had much *relevance* for people's lives, and certainly the ways in which relevancies were structured and experienced are *specific* to particular groups. I want to argue that class cultures are positioned differently within 'hegemonic space', that they are located more *distantly* from some hegemonic elements than they are from others. (7)

Thirdly, this discussion began with socio-historical considerations for two reasons. In the first instance, it cannot be reiterated often enough that women's position in production (which is tied in to their specifically occupational distribution) cannot be understood in isolation from their position in reproduction. It is the *relations between* production/reproduction which are critical; and ahistoricism in this regard leads readily to false conclusions about what is 'traditional' or 'conventional' in comparison with what is held to be the case today. In the second instance, the fact that people have 'an occupation' - usually practised as waged labour and quite separate from what they do in the home - tends to be taken for granted in analyses of contemporary society. It is as if 'occupations' had an independent life of their own, quite distinct from the activities people engage in domestically. Yet we know that people have always had various occupations in which they engaged simultaneously and consecutively, some of which were paid, some of which were not. Today, women's occupational distribution remains intimately linked to the familial division of labour, but neither dimension of production/reproduction relations can be understood without the other. In looking at modern-day patterns of occupational choices and the processes of transition in which they are realised, understanding the underlying meaning of a particular aspiration or expectation involves a close examination of the interwoven textures of the divisions of labour in which girls are

differentially enmeshed. Occupational choices might then be seen as expressions of cultural meaning from differentially constrained ranges of possibilities. In the next section, I want to explore dimensions of constraint and possibility in this respect.

1.2 *Gender, skills and vocation*

All discussions of women's labour force position and distribution take the question of skill as a problematic issue. Setting aside for the moment what the concept of skill means, or has been held to mean, we might consider the linkage of skill with *mastery*, one of the most interesting generic masculine terms in the English language. The 1977 edition of Chambers etymological dictionary defines mastery as "the power or authority of a master; upper hand; control; masterly skill or knowledge." The noun *master* is defined in turn as "one who commands or controls; a lord or owner; a leader or ruler; a teacher; one eminently skilled in anything; one who has complete knowledge; a workman who has set up on his own account, or is qualified to do so; formerly prefixed to a name or designation as Mr. is now - now only of a boy in this use." (8) In modern Germany, the equivalent term *Meister* (9) remains an occupational qualification with legal force, which requires a further period of education/training beyond completion of the apprenticeship. Without this accreditation, skilled crafts workers may not set up their own business, and they may not take on apprentices; this access and qualifications system derives, of course, from the medieval guilds.

The term *mastery*, then, comprises a joining together of knowledge and skills to represent power and authority. In the separation of the public and the private, and of production and reproduction, knowledge and control are male prerogatives. Women's exclusion from the skilled trades, and the characterisation of their work as less skilled or unskilled existed in both material and ideological form well before

industrial capitalism introduced new twists into patriarchal relations. The long term progressive exclusion of women from large sections of the occupational structure means that the division of labour by sex in production also has a well established history in working class experience. The patterns were set much earlier and more firmly than was the case for what became middle class occupations. The classical professions of the law, medicine, the Church and the university scholar are rather different altogether. Their recent history, well documented elsewhere, represents not only exclusion of 'ladies' from 'mental' knowledge and its practical applications, but also the entry of impoverished gentlemen into the labour force.

Today, horizontal and vertical sex segregation in the labour force is actually sharpest for manual and routine non-manual occupational sectors, those in which people from working class backgrounds are most likely to find themselves.⁽¹⁰⁾ In general, it is these sectors for which the strongest common-sense ideological justifications of that sex segregation are mounted, and in turn, these have provided a basis for the mooted 'traditionalism' of working class culture compared with the supposed 'progressivism' of the educated middle classes.

The practices of male dominated craft unions from the last century have been instrumental in rigidifying existing divisions between women's and men's work (see here Cockburn, 1983; Rubery, 1980). They ensured the relative privilege of craftsmen at the cost of 'less skilled' men and all women; there are few better examples of the articulation of patriarchy with capitalism. Alexander (op.cit.) adds that the activities which became working women's occupations in the course of the nineteenth century had only been transferred to the market in the previous 150-200 years. Hence there was no established apprenticeship system, there were no protectionist guilds - and without these accoutrements, the social recognition of skill and the bargaining power this affords were unattainable.

Occupational segregation by sex in the working class employment sectors is certainly *rooted in* pre-industrial patriarchal relations, but it was *taken up by* labour force segmentation under capitalist industrialisation. As a consequence

Women workers in the [printing and bookbinding] trades had a common, but difficult choice to make. In accepting work as compositors at lower rates (they were seldom offered 'the rate for the job') or as machine operators in jobs which displaced men, they were opting for food and rent instead of destitution. Yet, it was argued, they were taking that same food and rent out of the hands of men and thus acting against the interest of their own class. (Hunt, 1983, p.520)

In other words, such women *cannot act in their own interests as women without being 'class traitors'*, which suggests one reason why working class girls are still, today, very reluctant indeed to cross the occupational gender boundary. (11) My impression is that *young* women who go into traditionally male dominated skilled and artisan trades more frequently come from middle class backgrounds than can be demographically expected, although I have no firm evidence for this. If this is so, then perhaps what they represent is resistance to aspects of middle *class* values (rather than patriarchal values), and in a way which does not seriously threaten class interests. They may be crossing the occupational gender boundary, *but from a class location in which the division of labour by sex in production is not so firmly fixed* in historical and ideological terms. However, this does not mean that working class cultures are necessarily more 'traditional' in terms of sex roles, but rather that middle class women are positioned differently in relation to the relevant hegemonic elements. I shall return to this point below.

The objectification and personalisation of skill are mediating mechanisms for the maintenance of male privilege in the labour market. Without wishing to promote a simplistic relativism, it is sociologically more appropriate to speak of skills as

distinct points in a network of practices rather than as objective competencies attached to individuals. Phillips and Taylor (1986) argue that skills should be analysed as ideological constructs, in which patriarchal ideology finds its expression. How else might we begin to understand the skill ratings of, for example, the US federal dictionary of occupational titles? O'Donnell's (1984, Ch.1) discussion reports that the lowest possible skill rating is allocated to the occupation 'foster mother', which falls into the general category of 'domestic servants'; even a 'horse pusher' (who 'feeds, waters and otherwise tends horses en route by train') rates more highly.

These mediating mechanisms equally structure gendered occupational choice processes; they partially regulate the intersection of gender and occupation. In stark terms: firstly, women cannot choose skilled occupations because they cannot possess skills in the sense of *mastery*. Secondly, occupations practiced by women cannot be skilled because they are practiced by women. Thirdly, women may practice occupations in two categories: either 'unskilled' pure labour (as in factory or domestic work) or jobs demanding selfless dedication, where the skills involved are 'natural' and even mystical. Thus

The dominant construct of skill is the outcome of an historical compromise between two leading reproduction codes - the code of the aristocracy, with its paradigm of the amateur and the gentleman, and the code of the bourgeoisie predicated upon the position of the professional and the self-made man. Under the former, skill is constructed as a natural aptitude, an inheritance of cultural capital, a birthright and a legacy of effortless mastery. The latter code...defines skill in terms of personal initiative and drive, measured through an incremental grid of status and career. The rise of the career code can be traced in the history of its meaning...However, the code of inheritance is far from having been eclipsed...In combination, the two codes thus relay a contradictory message : skill is both an inherent property and a socially-achieved practice, both the cause and the effect of mastery...There is another major construct of skill, which increasingly mediates between the terms of this contradiction...From the time of the Puritan revolution, the code of vocation has offered an image of skill as a special gift or calling, acquired through a purely interior process...Skill here becomes a sign of grace. (Cohen, 1984, pp.116-7)

Cohen's analysis speaks directly to the linkages between gentleman/inheritance and man/mastery in a way which implicitly throws light on how women are excluded (which Cohen does not explore): women are not in possession of natural aptitudes for knowledge and skill as defined by male hegemony, and they can neither inherit nor learn. This excludes them from the terms of *both* of Cohen's codes, and hence *both* dimensions of skill. As for the vocation - Puritanism did not invent the concept, but rather transformed it, ultimately into the protestant work ethic. Women certainly did have access to the 'vocation code', both originally and in its transformed character, and in both religious and secular forms. The image of skill as a special gift or calling, acquired in (mysterious) interior ways, is equated here with a sign of grace. This indeed is woman's only chance. The natural and mystical qualities of womanhood are the very source of a potential rise to grace, exemplified in purity, innocence and dedication. (12) This positioning offers a ready translation into specific occupations for which women could be held to be naturally talented. The moral legitimation for their incumbency could not have come from a more powerful source: the Divine.

Hartmann (1976) has argued that occupational segregation by sex is very much a consequence of a contradiction between patriarchy and capitalism in which the latter threatened the former, because women could have been drawn into the labour market on the same terms as men. In practice, accommodations were made between the two systems (for general accounts, see Beechey, 1986; Garnsey et al., 1985). Similarly, it might be argued that it is women's access to vocation which is the weak link in male hegemony, so that is precisely here that the need for containment has been critical.

Vocation, as translated into the regulation of occupational choice, is primarily

relevant for jobs staffed by women of middle class origin. For the majority of working class women, vocation has little occupational significance - but considerable general power through the reproduction of femininity in the service of family life. (13) An account of young women metal and building trade apprentices comments that

They tend to draw a clear line between what is now - the pride and pleasure they draw from their work - and what has to be in a few years' time, to conform to the social image of a good wife and mother built upon renunciation. (Wagner, cited in Cockburn, 1985, p. 210, my emphasis)

Vocation certainly does spill over into all women's work lives outside the family, for women are not 'supposed' to be interested in extrinsic rewards. Indeed, their concern for intrinsic rewards has typically been held to 'explain' the 'non-rationality' of their occupational choices and career decisions (see Chisholm, 1987).

Gender-specific connections between 'career' and 'vocation' also deserve further exploration. Most writing in industrial/occupational sociology takes Wilensky's (1960) definition of career as a starting point: a sequence of events and stages linked in a hierarchy of onward upward progression and requiring planning, self-investment, etc. This pattern is that of the successful middle class white male for whom classical models of occupational choice were constructed (see Appendix I). Flett's (1971) study of *girl* schoolleavers indicated that they made little distinction between having a working life and having a career, i.e., they did not seem to perceive a difference at all. She was led to speculate further on what 'career' might imply beyond the standard sociological definition:

What distinguishes career-orientation...is the compound of 'using' the system as well as 'giving' oneself to the system...It is the combination of the exploitative and the vocational attitude to work which distinguishes career from pure labour on the one hand and from the

working life of selfless dedication on the other. It is in the 'career' category that women have been least often represented and [their presence least justified ideologically]. (Flett, 1971, p.3)

She argues that although women have been found in 'pure labour' occupational categories, their modal position has been in jobs which involve leading lives of selfless dedication - whether occupationally or domestically. Attempts to improve the pay and conditions of traditional female professions (i.e. *vocations*) have always met with opposition focused around the image of the selflessly dedicated woman. Flett suggests that the internalisation of this orientation tends to inhibit how women think about paid work altogether.

In other words, women's work should benefit others rather than themselves; women cannot legitimise their occupational choices, for example, by being openly ambitious. We are forcefully reminded, once more, that the key to vocation is sacrificial femininity, and that occupational choice processes are *part of* the reproduction of gender relations on those terms. Caplow (1954) points out that women who remain single in order to pursue a 'career' in the classic male sense of the term are liable to be characterised as having failed as women. Even if such 'career women' cohabit (heterosexually) they retain the sociological status of spinster. What might be taken as an outdated truism acquires a more interesting complexion when set against a juxtaposition of women's careers and women's vocation. It is only *when the career is defined as a vocation* that the 'career woman' becomes acceptable, because it is only then that *she does not relinquish her femininity*. In other words, only then does she remain under patriarchal control, through *containment*: a woman may have a career as long as she remains a woman, and the vocation is the only ideological mechanism for marrying (sic) the two. The alternative 'escape route' is to retain femininity by adopting the dual role, which is what the vast majority of women do try to achieve, whatever their class background. But, as Caplow writes, this is hardly practicable,

since the dual role handicaps women hopelessly in competition with men. Only women "of extraordinary talent" are likely to overcome the obstacles. How very true. (14)

This section's discussion has moved the argument forward in three ways. Firstly, occupational choice models available in the 'conventional' literature are all predicated to some degree upon the classic notion of a career, even where the emphasis lies in the structured impossibility of access to occupations/jobs with career potential. Secondly, given the linkages between career, vocation and skill, part of what structures girls' occupational choices must be a preference for avoiding pure labour where possible, leaving selfless dedication as the more desirable option. Thirdly, the pressures to which women are subject are differently constituted according to class position. Tentatively and crudely, we might suggest that middle class women are more 'distanced' from ideological elements which define and legitimate the sexual division of labour, in particular as expressed through the social construction of skill. They may be 'nearer' elements defining and legitimating power and authority relations as mediated through an occupational articulation of vocation. Working class women may perhaps be in a rather opposite position: 'nearer' to the sexual division of labour, 'further' from power and authority relations.

We are now in a position to look at recent empirical studies in the light of these issues. Explorations of the adolescent 'culture of femininity' offer information about the patterns and meanings of girls' occupational choices; studies of youth transitions assist in identifying 'groups' of girls in particular sets of circumstances.

1.3 *Girls and transitions: choices and circumstances*

Much recent writing on gender and transitions has been influenced by the youth cultural studies perspective developed across the seventies (see Chisholm (1990) for a critical review). The idea of a 'culture of femininity' - which interacts with and mediates structured gender inequalities - emerged from this tradition in youth research and remains influential in the field (see *inter alia* CCCS, 1978; McRobbie, 1982; McRobbie and Nava, 1984). In the earlier studies of youth cultures and subcultures (both within contemporary cultural studies and in those reaching back to the Chicago school) girls were either absent altogether or appeared in stereotyped, stylised guises. The 'culture of femininity' concept was an attempt to redress that marginality by asserting the independence of girls' (sub)cultures from those of boys and by providing a more realistic picture of female adolescent experience.

Additionally, until the mid-seventies, educational-occupational transition studies which had problematised gender were preoccupied with the highly educated, i.e. those who went on to college and university, and who were thus overwhelmingly of middle class origin (see [for the UK] Chisholm, 1978; Kelsall et al., 1970). In contrast, both youth cultural studies in general and the more recent youth transitions literature have placed working class circumstance and experience at the centre of attention. (Aggleton's (1987) study of middle class A-level college students is the only recent exception.) Most of these accounts draw on more or less cross-sectional data (Wallace's (1987) Isle of Sheppey study is the most notable exception); and none consider young people under the age of 15, i.e. as they approach the end of compulsory schooling (although Brown (1987) did observe pupil cultures in general). By their very nature and purpose, the 'culture of femininity' studies did not, of course, marginalise girls. However, as a group, the more recent transition studies have been less successful in this direction. Either they analytically privilege class

over gender (for example: Brown, op.cit.; Coffield et al.,1986; Jenkins,1983), or they attempt to bring gender *into* an articulation with class (for example: Aggleton, 1987; Jones,1986; Wallace, 1987). It ought not to follow that class analysis and mixed-sex samples lead to androcentric accounts, but in practice the contemporary youth transitions literature has not wholly freed itself from the legacies of the past.

Jenkins (1983, p.134) openly acknowledges an 'uncomfortable awareness' that his late seventies ethnography of 'lads, citizens and ordinary kids' was 'primarily concerned with the nature of class life-styles' and therefore 'necessarily superficial' and 'inadequate' on the question of gender. I do not concur with his logic, but Jenkins' overriding interest in his protestant working class Belfast 'lads' and dismissive neglect of his 'citizens' is a direct illustration of the influence of mainstream youth cultural studies (and especially Willis' Learning to Labour). Most of what he has to say about the Belfast girls he studied (rather at a distance, cf. Jenkins, op.cit., pp.19-21) is restricted to discussion of local mores and patterns of courtship and marriage within a 'separate spheres' male-dominated cultural tradition. This meant that for young women, marriage was the only legitimated route to independence and adulthood. (15) The implications for their labour market destinations are self-evident, regardless of local labour market conditions. In any event, the girls were much more likely to end up in unskilled work than were the boys, but Jenkins has nothing to say about the gender-specific processes that lead to these outcomes.

I would characterise the community culture Jenkins studied as one in which the kind of gendered 'apprenticeship' referred to earlier (p.25) continues to play a lynchpin role in the reproduction of gender relations. The binding force of Ulster protestant morality lends a tenacity to the retention of traditions which may be disintegrating more rapidly elsewhere. Coffield et al.'s (op.cit.) early eighties study of young adults in the North East explicitly describes such processes of disintegration for a rather

similar milieu, here grounded in the collective experience of the mining communities. The separate *and* interdependent *but* fundamentally unequal relationship between women and men that was (arguably) carried over from pre-industrial life continued to frame the experiences and expectations of young people, but the material basis of their class culture had disappeared. The material basis for their gendered culture had not dissolved, however: girls found themselves even more disadvantaged than boys as they sought to gain a foothold in training and employment. Local labour market conditions exacerbated the divisions between women's and men's work, and the young women were driven into pursuing marriage and childbearing as *alternative* routes to adulthood (in contrast to the lack of alternatives for Jenkins' Belfast girls).

Brown's (1987) mid-eighties study in urban-industrial South Wales pictures a local community where the processes of economic and social change have already irrevocably shifted its character. Collapse of the industrial base was followed by an expansion of the service sector (tellingly dubbed locally as the 'petticoat workforce') but unemployment rates remained high. Brown was interested in the ways in which the mass of 'ordinary kids' came to terms with schooling and transitions to work under such circumstances; in particular, he wanted to uncover differences *within* working class responses to education. Brown did not seek, nor did he apparently find, differences between ordinary girls' and ordinary boys' class cultural response to schooling (which he termed as an 'alienated' instrumentalism arising from the wish to 'get on' within the terms of that culture). He did note, however, that aspirations at 15+ and destinations at 17+ showed the greatest discrepancy for girls who had said they wanted to go into personal service occupations (largely hairdressing and nursery nursing). Many had not done so; instead, a much higher proportion of girls were working in shops and offices than had expressed a desire to do so two years earlier. In general, Brown refers only fleetingly to the *occupational* choices and

destinations of his sample; this is not his interest. He was, nevertheless, prompted to wonder whether occupational preferences express something more fundamental than simply a way of making a living: whether obtaining certain *types* of employment is central to the achievement of the culturally specified adult roles to which pupils aspire (Brown, op.cit., p.55). He did not pursue this idea, however.

Turning now to the writing which has focused more closely upon gender divisions per se and upon girls independently of boys, we might begin by recalling that the early 'culture of femininity' studies were concerned to show that the social reproduction of gender relations does not proceed in a straightforward, mechanistic manner. Girls are also active agents in the processes involved, and they do exercise various forms of resistance and accommodation. Occupational choice itself, however, was not of much moment. The transition between education and occupation (or unemployment) was recontextualised within a more holistic approach to understanding the conditions and meanings of girls' lives as they move from childhood into adulthood.

The culture of femininity studies, then, very much laid the groundwork for the current interest in gender and transitions. Sharpe's (1976) study of fourth-form comprehensive school girls in West London marked the beginnings of this contemporary literature. At the close of the eighties, it is sobering to look back at the early seventies and see how little things have changed since then. Sharpe described the occupational aspirations of the girls she studied as depressingly narrow and stereotyped. The most popular choice was office work, followed by teaching, nursing, shopwork, bank clerk, and then receptionist, telephonist, air hostess and nursery nurse. With the exception of those (few) girls wanting to be doctors or barristers, virtually none aspired to occupations other than those which were safely within the bounds of 'women's work.' The patterns of girls' aspirations did not

match the actual distribution of women workers, either, in that few girls chose factory work, catering and similar lower level service jobs. Sharpe interpreted these findings with reference to the cultural symbolism of femininity combined with an extension of women's traditional family roles into the marketplace. So, for example, secretarial and office work is clean and respectable; and it looks as if it holds the prospect of meeting eligible men (Griffin (1982) explored this, too). Many women's jobs are imbued with - even defined by - the feminine tasks of caring for and servicing other people. Their very nature can, in Sharpe's words (*ibid.*, pp166-7), suffocate individuality and leave little space for self-expression - self-sacrifice is a virtue reserved for women only.

Beecham (1980), in a study of the relationship between the culture of femininity and educational-occupational transitions for girls attending a London girls' comprehensive (16) which had been formed by the fusion of a grammar school and a secondary modern school, found that

The world of the skilled man worker was not their world and for the few girls who wanted to enter a career, occupational choice was related to the notion of 'being feminine'...The jobs which the ex-grammar girls wished to do all involved some form of extended or higher education and could be labelled careers. The jobs that the ex-secondary modern girls wished to do were fairly predictable and traditional forms of female labour which were mainly those of clerical and caring aspects...It is the culture of femininity that restricted their work expectations and poses motherhood as the main 'career'. (Beecham, 1980, pp.17-18)

The links between this formulation and the ideas outlined earlier (in section 1.2) are self-evident; but we need to know rather more about which aspects of the culture of femininity operate for specific groups of girls in the regulation of occupational choice. For example, what might distinguish between those choosing clerical and those choosing caring jobs, i.e., *within* Beecham's ex-secondary modern respondent group? (17) And what about those girls who choose neither clerical nor caring jobs,

but who are not 'career aspirers' in Beecham's terms? Are these the girls most likely to choose (in Flett's (op.cit.) terms) 'pure labour' jobs, or rather, slide into such, insofar as they find paid work at all? The 'pure labour' category of employment has never held positive attraction for many young people, given its monotony and conditions of work. However, as Roberts' (op.cit.) respondents said, pure labour in the form of employment in the Lancashire textile mills was both plentiful and paid relatively well. Thus we are unlikely ever to have found many girls who *aspired to* (i.e. desired) such occupations, though a great many will have *expected* to find such employment. So, in Griffin's (1985) well-known study, Birmingham working class schoolgirls said (at 15+) they wanted clerical or caring jobs, but ultimately (at 17) found themselves in low-level factory work.

Wallace's (1986,1987) Isle of Sheppey schoolleavers (of both sexes) maintained their (gendered) occupational choices even though the local labour market was patently no longer able to fulfil their hopes. In this sense, the reproduction of gendered patterns of choice had become functionally redundant (ibid., 1986, p.99), but there were no signs that these were breaking down. We might say that expectations had literally disappeared from young people's horizons, leaving aspirations uncontested because there was little labour market reality with which to engage. From the late seventies, young people were aware that their chances of realising their choices, whatever these might be, had declined significantly. Yet there may still be good *symbolic* reasons for retaining one's aspirations - for example, as expressions of femininity/masculinity per se. Even when there is no labour market in which to realise those expressions, occupational choices remain part of the (re)production of gender relations.

Wallace regarded her respondents as of reasonably homogenous working class origin, and so did not seek to distinguish internal differentiations already observable

at 16+, when her five-year study began. (18) She did, however, describe her school-leavers' job preferences as reflections of gender and class identities (ibid., 1987, pp. 41-58). Occupations were evaluated for their personal appropriateness against the two axes of feminine/masculine and rough/respectable. Those girls who saw themselves as neat and respectable, who were liked by their teachers but were not particularly academically inclined (though thought qualifications important), especially said they wanted to go into clerical work and to avoid factory work at all costs. In fact almost all girls saw factory work as undesirable (though a notable proportion eventually found themselves doing it). Shopwork occupied a middle position in the hierarchy - an acceptable alternative to clerical work, and a preferable option to factory work. Those occupations which required rather more training and qualifications basically comprised nursing and nursery nursing ('almost vocations', as Wallace comments) and hairdressing.

The 'clerical and caring' jobs so prominent in girls' aspirations *service* others in an *assisting* capacity; the former emphasise *respectability*, the latter *selfless dedication*. They are, then, occupational expressions of core aspects of the culture of femininity, but in practice such jobs may not be as easy to secure for all girls as many may think. (19) If the vocation of sacrificial femininity is not realisable occupationally, though, it may be pursued through work in the family (even if the accommodation is but an 'official' one). Beecham's (op.cit.) ex-grammar school girls and the 'more academic' girls in Griffin's (op.cit.) study face a differently accented set of problems from those which dominate most working class girls' horizons. In both cases, they aspired to occupations trapped in the gender-specific articulation of career with vocation. Insofar as they, or girls like them, resist that destiny, they must cross occupational gender boundaries. Since these girls are oriented to intermediate non-manual and professional aspirations, the salient potential transgression is vertical rather than horizontal: they must, in some way, confront the prescriptions for servicing and

assisting. Which girls are in a position to do so, and how do they come to understand 'femininity' in relation to themselves?

Aggleton's (1987) ethnography of young people from 'new middle class' backgrounds studying for their A-levels at an FE college in southern England wanted to uncover the reasons why their tutors identified them as potential underachievers. These were students who, in his words, came from homes high in cultural capital where at least one parent was employed in the field of symbolic control; their college tutors saw them as having relatively high academic potential but likely to do badly at A-level because of their active social lives and their attitudes towards study. He concluded that the orientations of the students could not be understood as productive resistance to the social reproduction of class and gender relations, but rather as at best weakly emancipatory in these respects. The invisible pedagogy of their home environments encouraged the acquisition of personal and evaluative competences, especially of verbal communication skills, used to challenge externally imposed expectations and demands - from the firm foundation of confidence in their own judgements and taste. (20) These students' curriculum and career choices, however, reflected their attempts to reproduce their parents' cultural and social locations. Parents themselves had intervened at all critical points in their children's educational trajectories to ensure a *liberal but formally educationally successful* schooling context. The students' A-level choices incorporated a *disavowal of the vocational and of the scientific-mathematical*: in other words, they accepted the discourse/practice hierarchy of school knowledge, but not its field hierarchy. The interesting point here is that for both sexes these choices were bound up with the gendered identities they saw as culturally acceptable, i.e. with the stylised images realised and affirmed in their milieu :

The male students located themselves somewhere between the brutish manliness they

associated with manual labour [= male students on male-typed academic or vocational courses] and the essential impotence they saw as characteristic of those whose involvement in mental labour was both committed and industrious [= male college teachers?!] (Aggleton, 1987, p.73)

The female students distinguished themselves both from those who had left school at 16+ and from those who had stayed on at school to do their A-levels. The very fact of leaving school at 16+ was interpreted as evidence that such girls were only interested in pursuing domestic trajectories, which was a wholly unacceptable orientation and image for the college girls. But those who had opted for the sixth-form were also viewed as conformists: they not only acceded to the school's but also to gendered expectations of behaviour and identity. Such girls were described as aspiring towards traditional female employment such as nursing or office work; they were despised in much the same way as were their college peers who were pursuing secretarial or similar vocational courses. The college girls did not, of course, grasp the gendered quality of their own aspirations, locked as these were into media, aesthetic and symbolic fields; the gender-typing of fields of discourse/practice was masked by alternative political-cultural evaluative criteria. It would seem that they were able to define themselves unproblematically as 'gender trend-setters', so to speak, by automatically disqualifying girls who were industrious, openly ambitious, interested in scientific/technical subjects, and so on. My own data (see Chapters 2 and 4) suggest that it is high-achieving girls from working class backgrounds who are more inclined to fall into this latter group. There are, then, some clear indications here that class (fraction) differentiated cultures of femininity are actively implicated in the meanings attached to given occupational aspirations by differently located groups of girls.

Griffin (op.cit.) particularly wanted to show that there is no such thing as a 'typical girl'. The actual experiences and attributes of many girls are, she argued, hidden and

denied by *assumptions* about what typical girls are like. These assumptions, related to ideologies of femininity, nevertheless influence girls' experiences at school and at work. Griffin's purpose was thus to *deconstruct* stereotypes of adolescent femininity. In consequence, she does not seek to draw out the finer patterns of adolescent femininities which are associated with sets of social, educational and cultural circumstances - although some of her findings suggest such patterns, especially the differences she noted between her Afro-Caribbean and indigenous respondents. In general, office work - a 'good' job - represented an idealised form of femininity for both girls and their mothers, whereas factory work was something for the trouble-makers and layabouts. But for some (especially black) girls, factory work as an aspiration (not as reality) was an expression of resistance. Such girls interpreted office work both as 'snobby' and as demanding a feminine submissiveness and flirtatiousness they were unwilling to act out (ibid., pp.100-4). The nine 'black sisters' Mac an Ghail (1988) included in his ethnography of eighties urban black youth had also developed a solidary culture of resistance in response to their schooling experiences, but of a different kind. These were high achieving working class girls studying for A-levels at sixth-form college, who were determined to succeed educationally no matter what obstacles were placed in their way. For these girls, the rejection of education to which they saw young black men as (understandably) prone was not a productive solution. Rather, they saw academic qualifications as the escape route from black working class female work, and had no intention of accepting repeated advice from teachers to go into child care, office work or banking.

The Birmingham girls in Griffin's (op.cit.) study, however, already knew their choices and chances were limited. The labour market was both heavily sex-segregated and very depressed, and they did not have the qualifications that the black sisters did. They simply wanted to find the best job they could under the circumstances. Marriage was viewed as the only viable prospect for attaining

independent adulthood, bringing with it a measure of economic protection against their own weak position in the labour market. (21) Lees' (1986, Ch.3) study of the social construction of sexuality confirms girls' very mixed feelings about marriage. The fifth-form London comprehensive schoolgirls (from a variety of class and ethnic backgrounds) she interviewed in the early eighties almost universally expected to marry. It remains, Lees argued, the only way girls can protect themselves from the 'slags and drags' dichotomy that constructs and constrains female sexuality. Nevertheless, girls are at least implicitly aware of the contradictions between the ideal and the reality of marriage. Many spoke of husbands in negative terms - frequently violent, overdrinking, behaving like 'pashas'. The girls wanted to marry because there is no realistic alternative - they have "neither the financial independence nor the cultural support to make other choices" (ibid., p.95).

Finally, resistance to the reproduction of gender relations as expressed through (rather than simply 'against') the culture of femininity has been a favourite theme in the cultural studies literature. In the first instance, resistance strategies reveal the complex and contradictory quality of social and cultural reproduction. But secondly, it is possible to see that forms of resistance are frequently contradictory in themselves, tending to lead towards accommodations rather than transformations. Samuel (1983) writes that whilst the working class Australian girls she studied may resist and rebel as a group, they were also caught up in the culture of femininity. They admitted that in personal terms they see little alternative to a 'traditional' female adult life; their public rejection of elements of the culture of femininity constituted more of a surface, partial resistance.

This [resistance] does not mean...that they are feminists in the sense that they have elaborate theories about the subordinate position of women in the social structure. They do not represent the seeds of a nascent working class feminism. Their rebellion is not against *male* dominance as such but against authority as it directly impinges on their lives. Coercive power

acts on them in contradictory ways so that their reactions to this oppression are also contradictory and ultimately self-destructive. They do not correctly identify the forces which imprison them...The only avenue to more control over their lives, education in its broadest sense, is closed. (Samuel, 1983, p.369)

The reference to working class female resistance as centred on authority in general rather than on male dominance in particular is interesting. The girls are, in effect, demonstrating class solidarity by resisting oppression as exercised through the power and authority of state agencies. They are not resisting patriarchal hegemony, and they are not resisting the established division of labour by sex. Class solidarity overrides gender solidarity; it is in this sense that they do not identify the forces which imprison them. The interpretation of resistance in Samuel's study parallels the historical dilemma of working class women in the labour market as discussed earlier (in section 1.2). This interpretation also clarifies further the concept of distance/proximity to ideologised elements of women's subordination, which has been introduced at several points in this chapter. The idea of distance does not imply that a particular element has less effect than another, but rather that its effect is differently articulated (*vis a vis* others) for girls and women from given social and cultural contexts. So, for example, girls may have to secure a job as part of the transition to adulthood

but of more significance is their future role as wives and mothers and as helpers in the process of production. Women carry out the menial and servile and nurturant tasks for those doing the 'really important jobs', i.e. the male breadwinners. The main criterion then for judging women is their femininity, and this is more the case for working class women than for their middle class counterparts, who may achieve status through professional or other well-paid occupations. (Samuel, *ibid.*, p.370, my emphasis)

In sum, women's subordination lies at the universal core of a multidimensional space which holds the 'reference network' of gender discourse (see footnote (7)), but the forms and dynamics of its expression change with historical and specific

circumstance. The main criterion for judging all women is indeed their femininity. But just as there is no such thing as a 'typical woman', so can there be no such thing as a unitary culture of femininity operating indiscriminately. From this perspective, the occupational choices girls make can be seen as symbolic expressions of *differentiated* cultures of femininity, which are in turn associated with the social circumstances and cultural milieux in which they grow up. The next chapter therefore turns to the task of developing a model of the modalities of gender relations which can expose some of these patterns.

Footnotes

1 Appendix I provides a concise critical summary of the field.

2 It is impossible to ignore Shorter's work, given its influence in the field. Bradley quite rightly (critically) summarises his view to be that 'the market liberated women from the cage of the patriarchal home' (ibid., p.34). He now appears to be openly arguing in socio-biological terms for the historical inevitability of male dominance; processes of social and economic modernisation can ameliorate but not eradicate women's subordination (Shorter, 1988).

3 Snell (1985) claims this pattern continued through to the eighteenth century; Macfarlane (1978) suggests that the particularly marked individualism of English society has traditionally offered more 'space' in crossing the boundaries set by social ascription in comparison with other European cultures (although this begs the question of whether the spaces were simply differently located).

4 On the other hand, wives' employment status per se made no difference to the balance of power between married couples. The historical and contemporary evidence on the relationship between wives' employment status and marital power relations is mixed; what is certain is men's persistently low domestic labour participation rate, repeatedly found across Europe in regular surveys (e.g. EOC, 1989, McRae, 1989).

5 Relative to the increasingly available alternatives, the status and pay of domestic service was poor and therefore declining in popularity by the turn of the century. The choice was thus between shopwork, of higher status but with poor pay and conditions, and factory work, which was disliked but plentiful and with better pay. At the close of the eighties, the choices facing working class girls in the North of England are little changed. Those who are 'fortunate' gain access to routine non-manual work; factory work is no longer exactly plentiful, but it remains an option; shopwork is relatively plentiful but still poorly-paid and frequently casualised; even domestic service has returned to recruit maids-of-all-work for affluent families in the South-East.

6 One which continues, from my personal observation, to present itself in similar form amongst contemporary farming families in middle Europe.

7 This idea of distance/proximity raises a crucial theoretical point. Patriarchy may be a virtual historical constant, for all practical purposes, but its realisations differ according to historically specific relations between



production/reproduction. In spatial terms, we would need to identify the operative hegemonic elements in relation to each other, and then to position groups in this network according to the complex of gendered traditions and practices expressed in their ways of life. I do not propose to pursue this line here, although it would be interesting to try. Rather, I shall make use of the idea and suggest one dimension of its applicability in relation to a (crude) differentiation between working-class and middle-class women.

8 Its female equivalent, *mistress*, is no less interesting (see, for example, Adams and Ware, 1979; Spender, 1980). Its original meaning paralleled that of master, except that the power and skills in question were linked to the domestic economy: "a woman employer of servants or head of a house or family" (Chambers Etymological Dictionary, 1977 edition).

9 The noun *Meister* is grammatically masculine. In its stem form it can apply only to craftsmen, traditionally feminised by a suffix and change in grammatical gender. In other words, the term was not treated generically. Until very recently women who qualified for their *Meisterbrief* were therefore referred to by using the feminised form, and this would formally still be the correct title. In everyday usage, people are now increasingly inclined to use the stem form generically.

10 An energetic debate continues around the questions of women's occupational distribution, their class position and consciousness, and the changing nature of the occupational structure and the labour market. A range of positions are represented in Crompton and Mann (1986).

11 Phillips and Taylor's (1986) line of reasoning accords with this point. Following Braverman (1974), they conclude that the primum mobile in the conflicts between capital and the craft community became the preservation of *masculine* skills. They argue that the association between craft/skill and masculinity itself predates industrial capitalism, making it impossible for girls to 'choose' most skilled manual trades because these are *culturally equivalent* to masculinity. So to choose implies crossing the boundary of the binary opposition between masculinity and femininity in the western cultural tradition (see here Haste (1986) for a discussion of gender and dualism).

12 See Duby (1989) for an exposition of precisely these processes at work in an account of courtly love and patriarchy in early mediaeval France.

13 See here Bates (1989) for an account of working class young women's resistance to the introduction of the concept of vocation into the occupational sphere as they proceeded through a YTS community care course.

14 Tangri's (1972) account of 'role innovators' (i.e. American women college seniors who overtly aspired to occupations in which at least 70% of the incumbents were male) provides an interesting footnote to this discussion. She writes that for such women "reasons for choosing a vocation...appear to be individualistic and for personal satisfaction rather than altruistic or security-oriented...In contrast to the traditional woman who expects to live through and for others, the role innovator expects to make a life for herself through her own efforts" (ibid., p.188-9, my emphasis). Why, one wonders, did Tangri suddenly switch from using the term 'occupational choice' to that of 'vocation' at this point, when, given what she writes, her 'role innovators' were actually divesting themselves of a vocational orientation? Nevertheless, it is clear that women's vocation, living through and for others, contrasts with what the role innovators are doing, living for themselves. What essentially happens is that such women are refusing to espouse their secular vocational destiny, i.e., refusing to become 'women', at least partially and perhaps ultimately temporarily.

15 Girls who left home to live on their own or share a flat with girlfriends risked marginalisation on the grounds of presumed sexual promiscuity, which damaged their marriageability and thus, ultimately, impeded access to 'real' adulthood. At the same time, of course, working class Ulster wives are no more strangers to the labour

market than are working class women elsewhere. Characteristically for a chronically depressed economy, women have traditionally and readily found jobs as unskilled cheap labour in the province's textile industry, whereas their menfolk either found better paid skilled work in and around shipbuilding - or they found no work at all. These patterns remained unchanged in the late seventies. Two-thirds of Jenkins' 'ordinary kids' (by far the largest group in his sample) left school with no certified educational qualifications; half found unskilled work and a third went into skilled manual employment. But twice as high a proportion of the girls went into unskilled employment as did the boys (two-thirds and one-third respectively). *Inter alia*, Jenkins concludes that the unskilled occupational career, a characteristic consequence of the *absence* of a clearly formulated occupational goal, is part of an *unplanned* transition process (ibid., pp.80,130). The implications must therefore be that the girls in his study were more prone to display these attributes than were the boys. My interpretation would be rather different, however (see Chapter 2).

16 The findings are particularly interesting since the study, by chance, was conducted in the same girls' school which took part in the GAOC project (and which therefore provides data for the current study).

17 One hypothesis might read that the former sub-group are girls whose families place particular value on respectability. The cultural symbolism expressed through 'respectability' is both gender and class (fraction) differentiated in British society. Its modern expressions are especially a Victorian legacy, although its origins are much older.

18 Wallace rather identified a process of social polarisation over the ensuing five years based on the success with which young people had managed to establish themselves on the labour market and (as a consequence) domestically through marriage and house purchase. Over time, those young women who had secured good employment became more (and not less) committed to paid work as an integral part of a couple-based strategy for the provision of a comfortable standard of living for themselves and their children. But girls had found it more difficult to secure such employment than had boys in the years after leaving school, since they had fewer opportunities to introduce flexibility into their negotiation of the local labour market.

19 It goes without saying that jobs have been generally scarce for schoolleavers in the eighties. Outside the metropolitan regions, especially outside Greater London, clerical jobs have not been necessarily plentiful, especially secure jobs with reasonable pay and conditions.

20 What appeared as resistance 'for the sake of it' to college tutors, continually subjected to critical questioning of course form and content and of teacher-student relations, was rather a transference of the social practices parents encouraged. In other words, students were attempting to reproduce social relations, not to transform them (cf. Aggleton, ibid., p.77ff).

21 In fact, almost all the girls in Griffin's study entered traditionally female dominated occupations, but fewer than half found office jobs. The majority went into factory work, retailing and hairdressing.

2 The modalities of gender relations: a general model

All theoretical models are constrained by their own discourses, and it is always easier to see the contradictions and imperfections obtaining in discourses not of one's own creation. This essay attempts to recast the study of occupational choice in order to understand its articulation with gender relations more fruitfully than we seem to have managed in the past. What are girls actually 'doing' in making the transition from education to employment, youth to adulthood, through the vehicle of occupational choice processes? What might model *how* they approach and negotiate routes through those processes, during which many will resist in some form but most - *not all* - will 'strike a bargain' with the forces of social reproduction? (1) "The significance of these decisions should not be underestimated...people make positive choices which leave them vulnerable" (Wilson & Wyn, 1983, pp.2,12).

It is not enough to say that occupational choice is a myth, whether for girls or for boys. If it is a myth, then we need to map the mythology and understand why and how it exists. I do not think that girls (at any rate) are choosing preferred occupations in the narrow sense of the word. The choices they make comprise two related processes. Firstly, they select strategies for dealing with the structured contradictions they face according to their circumstances and resources. Secondly, in doing so, they work with elements from a differentiated culture of femininity, and these elements are combined in ways which are specified to the social space in which they find themselves. They combine elements of the culture of femininity within the framework of gendered vocation, whose terms are mediated through the local opportunity structure, through their evaluation of their educational achievements and through the influences of family and peers. At any moment, the actual occupational choice is the symbolic representation of

these processes.

This chapter is designed to unpack the preceding paragraph in three ways. I want, firstly, to indicate how the findings of (some examples of) research on girls' and women's perspectives and plans in relation to their future lives can be seen to support the arguments made. Secondly, the nature of the model developed here will be described. Thirdly, the three levels of the model will be presented : cultural semantics, gender locations and dynamics.

2.1 Perspectives and life plans

Just as in the previous chapter's wider review, my purpose in this section is to examine specific, representative research findings which illuminate and support the plausibility of the approach taken here. We have already surveyed youth researchers' studies of gender and transitions, most of which are of UK origin. In fact, the majority of the literature which documents and explores girls' / women's educational-occupational transitions is North American. Within this, there is a considerable body of work which simply documents the sex-stereotypical nature of aspirations and expectations across childhood, youth and early adulthood, and we shall refer to it in Chapter 5 in discussing the occupational choices of the girls from this study. Here, I restrict the discussion to three sets of work which address different strands of the general argument : a longitudinal study of US college women in the sixties (Angrist and Almquist, 1975), a sequence of cross-sectional studies of North American high school girls in the seventies (Gaskell, 1975, 1977, 1983), and my own study of American high school girls in the early eighties (Chisholm, 1984).

Angrist & Almquist's Careers and Contingencies marked the close of an era that had opened with the publication of Myrdal & Klein's (1956) Women's Two Roles. Their text comprised an integrated assessment of the abundant research into women's roles on both sides of the Atlantic during the sixties and seventies, including the writers' own longitudinal study of American college women. As such, the account and the research which informs it is well representative of the perspectives and empirical referents which dominated work in this field over that period. These writers placed their discussion around the concepts of essential ambiguities and tensions, but they did *not* ground this perspective in theories of social and cultural reproduction. They characterised the extent and patterning of women's labour force participation as limited by *external barriers* (structures making it difficult for mothers to compete in the labour market and to arrange for their domestic substitution) and *internal barriers* (ways of behaving and believing learned in childhood, deeply-ingrained through the process of growing-up). Today the terms contradiction and struggle have replaced essential ambiguities and tensions; structural and ideological constraints substitute for external and internal barriers. Angrist and Almquist also replaced a deficit model of women with a positive one stressing women's active struggles and their realism - although they did not speak directly in these terms:

Instead of assuming that women are haunted by marriage-career conflict or paralysed by their own feminine traits, we demonstrate [in our research] that women are open to many possibilities and that they try to remain flexible and adaptable...they expect, realistically, to incorporate a number of roles into their adult lives. Such openness helps them cope with the many demands on their lives... (ibid., pp.32-33)

This very flexibility hinders 'single-minded pursuit of a career' of the kind normatively expected of middle-class men. It can also lead to indecision and hesitation, in the sense that women may not be in a position to 'make up their

minds' as speedily and as early as rationalistic career decisionmaking dictates.

Angrist and Almquist's own cohort study of American college women in the mid-sixties showed the two most popular occupational aspirations to be high-school teacher (rated as a 'traditional' aspiration for women) and college professor (rated as 'non-traditional'). These two choices represent the most common solutions to the inevitable contradictions faced by the (then so termed) 'highly-educated woman'. Almost all the respondents wanted to marry and have children, but preferred to delay both for some time. These women students shifted their ideas a lot over the four years of the study about the domestic division of labour and husband-wife relations. A significant minority never reached any stable perspective, but the emerging consensus was a kind of progressive conservatism in which they favoured some partial overlap between husband-wife roles. Written down in this way, the findings look old-fashioned and even trite. But behind these statements lies evidence of *lived struggles* with ideologies, where the outcomes are by no means predetermined or stable. It was the ideology of motherhood that ensured the conservatism of majority outcome. All the women agreed either strongly or moderately with the view that children need their mothers, so that this had to have absolute priority over whatever else *they might want to do* with their lives. In other words, the element of ideological hegemony which was most successful in *trapping* these women *into* social reproduction is that relating to sacrificial femininity.

However, it was as the college women began to assess the realities of combining career and family that their ambivalence about paid work grew most sharply. In other words, it is the *structural* constraints which really *bite at the end of the day*. Meanwhile, their struggles are intense and they try to avoid giving in for as long as possible - adopting a '*contingency orientation*' in which they are indecisive,

vague, weighing out alternatives, stalling for time (ibid., p.80).

In my own study (op.cit.) of American high school girls aged 16/17 in the early eighties, half of the respondents knew very clearly what they wanted to do occupationally and knew how to go about achieving their goals. These were the girls characterised by their teachers and careers advisers as sensible, mature and rational. They were also girls who had already accommodated most fully to the processes of social reproduction, and their occupational choices reflected this. They were not those about to challenge the terms of gender relations, although it *looked as if* they had engaged seriously with the question of their future occupation and employment. In reality, the process of occupational choice for these girls had been subordinated to the reproduction of femininity, and the outcome - the actual choice - was a symbolic expression of the strategy chosen to deal with the contradictions. Whatever struggles and resistances these girls might be going through, they were not being played out in this context. In contrast, it was the girls who said they could not decide or had not decided, who either wanted to be everything or had no idea at all what they wanted to be: *these* were the girls who could be said to be living struggles and resistances in the context of occupational choice processes. Yet these were the ones termed by teachers as vague, indecisive, unrealistic. (2)

Turning to socio-historical locations very different from those occupied by American college women in the sixties, Gaskell's research on high school girls in Boston (1975,1977) and Vancouver (1983) exposes very clearly the obstacles women face in attempting to carve out a life which is acceptable or desirable. The Boston respondents were at school in a white working-class suburb, but came from social class backgrounds (measured by *both* parents' education and occupations) which varied to some degree. Debates about the extent to which

working class culture is more 'traditional' than middle-class culture in relation to sex-roles led Gaskell to ask whether class and sex-role ideology are linked in different ways for different social groups. (3) Such differential linkages presuppose that sex-role ideology is not a unitary phenomenon, and help explain conflicting positions taken in discussions of working-class 'traditionalism' or otherwise. Of initial interest is that *all* girls were in agreement upon what 'femininity' comprises (appearance, passivity, and interpersonal competence), and equally that it is 'quite important' to take its requirements into account in one's own behaviour but 'overdoing' it invites scepticism.

On this evidence, the attributes of appearance, passivity and interpersonal competence are part of a 'culture of femininity' which affect all women to some degree; and (only) in this sense can the concept be described as unitary. If, however, we look more closely at these elements of 'femininity', we might suggest that girls in different social and cultural locations will be positioned differently in relation to such specific elements. We have considered this already (in Chapter 1) through reviewing the wider literature.

Gaskell's (1975) analysis also indicates that *other* dimensions of sex-role ideology (frequently simply elided with the idea of a culture of femininity) are differentially related to both social class and academic achievement. Essentially, her working class respondents proved distinctly more 'traditional' in their attitudes to the division of labour and in their desire for change in women's position. These girls were more likely to be antagonistic towards feminism *and* to support equal pay, but *not* to support the breakdown of occupational segregation by sex either in the family or at work except that they thought more women could well be employed in *professional* jobs. But the working class girls were *more* vehement in their rejection of the legitimacy of gendered power relations than were the

middle class girls in her sample. Finally, Gaskell found that it is academic achievement which is connected to a belief in equal opportunities, quite independently of social class origin. It seems clear that class and sex-role ideologies are linked in differential and complex ways, which cannot be grasped in a *linear* fashion.

However, the dilemmas faced by American college women in the sixties were still effective for seventies schoolgirls: 80% of Gaskell's Boston sample said they would be very disappointed could they not have children, but only 30% thought they would return to employment when their youngest child had reached school age. Hardly any wanted to be an employed mother with a preschool child. However, over a third of the sample said it was 'not very important' to them to marry. Gaskell's findings date from the mid-seventies, but Lees (1986) also reports widespread disinclination towards the idea of marriage. Many of the 15/16 year old London girls she interviewed in the early eighties did not want to marry, though they were likely to expect they would do so. Wyn & Wilson (op.cit.) also report for a 1982 sample of Australian inner-city working-class 16 year-olds that girls' "real priority was on having a child - entering a (dependent) relationship with a male was seen as a necessary corollary" (ibid., p.20). The working class London inner-city early teenage girls interviewed for the current study were strikingly inclined to similar views (see Chapter 4). The overwhelming majority wanted to delay marriage. Many specifically rejected it but were inclined to accept its inevitability.

In a further analysis of the same Boston data Gaskell (1977) looked specifically at occupational aspirations. Slightly under half of the (243) girls aspired to occupations broadly above the routine non-manual level, virtually all at the semi-intermediate professional levels and also in traditionally female-dom-

inated branches. A third of the girls wanted, at 18, to be teachers or nurses (classic career-vocations). A quarter of the girls wanted to be secretaries, and of the remainder, only a tiny 2% (6 girls) hoped to enter a distinctly blue-collar occupation, i.e. a skilled trade. Once more, *specific* aspects of sex-role ideology were linked with the *level* of these girls' aspirations, quite independently of the effects exercised by social class and academic achievement. Egalitarian beliefs and a desire for change in women's position were closely related to higher-level aspirations. These findings accord with the general body of research into girls' occupational aspirations (see Chapter 5), and they underline the connections between sex, skill and the 'impossibility' for women of choosing skilled manual trades except under specific conditions.

The 'equal opportunities' argument which girls employ when they give reasons for having high level aspirations is of a voluntaristic nature. It can and does readily co-exist with more traditional accommodations to *other* elements of sex-role ideology. In effect, the 'equal opportunities' argument disguises the structural constraints which keep aspirations within gender boundaries by characterising these as *free choices*. Actual limitations placed upon women are then simply accepted as somehow immovable 'facts of life'.

It was these immovable facts of life which Gaskell's later Vancouver study set out to explore in interviewing 17-18 year old white working-class girls. Their attitudes towards the domestic division of labour were taken as a starting-point for looking at the reproduction of family life alongside the reproduction of waged labour. The findings demonstrated the processes of acceptance of that division through *differently constituted* struggles with both ideological elements and structural imperatives. These struggles are not straightforward. (4) The

majority of the Canadian eighties schoolgirls *selected* elements of ideologies about domestic life, and their selection exerted important effects on how they interpreted their experiences. These 'ideological compositions' worked in inter-relationship with a clear understanding of structural constraints on the alternatives open to them. The girls thus had to struggle to come to terms both with their partial rejection of 'traditionalism' and with the world 'as it is' or is 'supposed' to be. The results were a variety of combinations of positions and strategies of accommodation and resistance.

In most (but not all) instances, the 'enactment' of occupational choices - or their substitutes - ensures the reproduction of gender relations, and hence patriarchal relations. Kelly & Nihlen (1982) have commented that since some women *do* escape the sex-role messages of schools, we must ask *whether* women 'slip through socialisation cracks', *how many* do so, and *at what cost*. The failure to confront explaining 'the ones who get away' has been the weakest point in theories of social and cultural reproduction. Clearly some forms of resistance are powerful enough to break through; but most are not quite powerful enough, and they all entail costs as well as benefits. What we do not find in the literature is a worked through analysis which links ideological and structural components as the keys to decisionmaking processes and outcomes for historically specific groups, so that we can come to see voiced occupational aspirations and expectations as social signifiers. It is this task that the model described below sets out to begin to do.

2.2 *The modalities of gender relations: the nature of the model*

Struggles of accommodation and resistance offer varying potential for a degree of transformation. Equally, strategies for dealing with contradictions are likely to be systematically differentially available to women according to their social and cultural position. Hence an adequate model of occupational choice needs to develop a detailed and systematic understanding of 'sets' of positions and strategies, as well as a sensitive understanding of the meanings attached to particular occupational choices.

The model developed here, then, is essentially a structural model of the social and cultural reproduction of gender relations. There are two core (and linked) criticisms of such models: that they do not adequately take account of the active subject, and that they fail to incorporate principles of transformation. In other words, that such models lack a dynamic. Much recent debate in the sociology of education has concentrated on these problems (see here Apple, 1986; Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986; Giroux, 1983; Whitty, 1985). Sociological analysis has yet to produce a satisfactory solution capable of holding in balance the dialectics between agency and structure, change and stability. A third problematic aspect of much sociological analysis (howsoever theoretically informed) is its inclination to the unidimensional. Complex interrelations are reduced to the poverty of a single descriptor. Yet

To account for the infinite diversity of practices in a way that is both unitary and specific, one has to break with *linear thinking*...and endeavour to reconstruct the networks of interrelated relationships which are present in each of the factors...Indices...are...the destroyers of structures." (Bourdieu, 1984, pp.107,125)

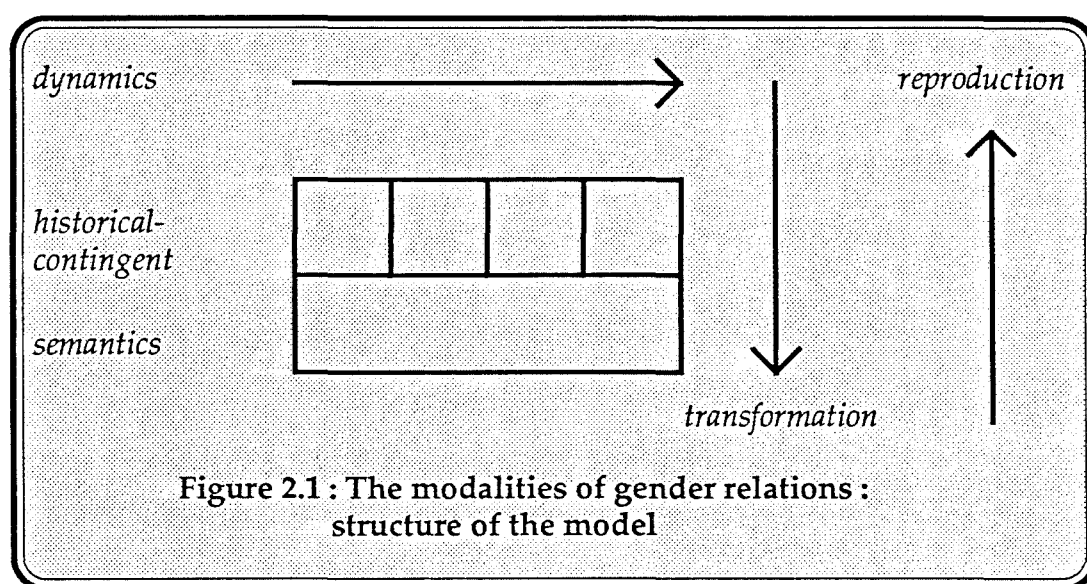
The concept of a multi-dimensional *social space* (in the sense used by Bourdieu,

ibid., Part II), which is populated by positions, intersected by boundaries and crossed by trajectories, is altogether a more fruitful approach. In the model developed here, the concept of *transition* is used to anchor both active subjects and dynamics into its remit. This enables us to see both (constraining and enabling) structures and the power of agency in the context both of stability and of change. From this perspective, it is at the crosscutting intersections of social space that the entangled tensions between structure and agency, reproduction and transformation, can be appraised most clearly. The principles and methods of analysis used here will seek to touch and expose the critical moments in trajectories which are constituted by individual practices and by the exigencies of social and cultural context. To understand the dynamics of social life, it is the points of transition which are critical for and vulnerable to the forces of social reproduction and the possibilities of transformation.

In this perspective, then, occupational choices are taken as significant surface realisations of a 'gender code' regulating the social reproduction of gender field, relations. My purpose is to uncover the underlying meanings of these surface realisations and to specify the circumstances in which particular patterns and processes of choice emerge. The model I have developed to respond to these aims has three linked components, and might be pictured as shown overleaf (Fig .2.1).

The theoretical content of these three components will be further discussed below (in section 2.3); here I want simply to indicate their nature. The *semantic base* refers to the deep structure of European culture as this constructs the field of femininity. The gender code comprises the principles of classification for that

which set up tensions and potential tensions between the cultural elements contained in the field. This component of the model relates, then, to implicit systems of meaning, and as such bears a relation to the concept of *doxa*.



The *historical-contingent* level consists of sets of culturally specific 'gender locations'. Here, historically specific modes of production/reproduction relations provide a framework in which girls' and women's choices and circumstances are contingent upon their positioning within and between the major lines of social cleavage (ethnicity, race, religion, social class...). This component of the model relates, then, to social and cultural space, and as such bears a relation to the concept of *habitus*. The gender locations identify the modalities of realisation of specialised gendered *habitus*.

The level of *dynamics* refers to trajectories of the gendered transitions biography as these are embedded in (i.e. arise from and are transformed through) lived social relations. Individuals may here adopt orientations and strategies for constructing a trajectory, but they cannot do so without taking the terms of the culture of femininity and social/cultural circumstance into consideration in some way. (Even opposition and rejection implies a recognition of those terms.) It is at this level, however, that individuals have the opportunity to move between gender locations (or to remain where they are) through agency and/or circumstance. In other words, this component of the model relates to time, and it bears a relation to the concept of practice. As such, the (potential) source of transformation lies at the level of transitional dynamics.

In the context of the research study which has yielded this model, I have been able to specify intuitively the semantics of gender relations; to specify systematically particular modalities of the gendered habitus; and to describe (for a given group of girls) the dynamics of transition in their social and educational contexts.

I want now to consider the relationship of this model to the well-established concepts of code and habitus, which are linked with those of cultural grammars and social space. My attempt to recast the study of occupational choice in the light of gender divisions was not, in fact, explicitly guided by the existing work which uses these concepts. As the model began to crystallise into its (provisionally) final form, I came to find some aspects of Bourdieu's thinking (though not all, and not necessarily in the same way) useful in clarifying its structure. This is why I have related its three components to the concepts of doxa, habitus and practice. I locate the concept of code essentially at the level of doxa, i.e. at the level of cultural semantics. This does not mean that code and doxa are identical, however. A code is a set of ordering principles for systems of cultural meaning,

whose assemblies of elements might collectively be described as doxa. Cultural codes, here a gender code, can be said to regulate the interrelationships between elements. (For a definitive discussion of the concept of code, see Bernstein, 1990.) These interrelationships create orthodox oppositions with which subjects must struggle at the historical-contingent level. This is slightly different from Bourdieu's understanding, in which it is the concept of habitus which encompasses both the principles and the practices realised in a given field, i.e. habitus itself is the generative grammar of social action (Bourdieu, op.cit., p.170ff; see also Bourdieu, 1986, p.150).

The reason Bourdieu insists upon this formulation is precisely because, in his general theory, the dimension of dynamics is underdeveloped. As Liebau (1987, pp.52-100) firmly documents, Bourdieu has never properly addressed himself to the elaboration either of a theory of the subject or a theory of socialisation. In order to locate the potential for social transformation at the mediating level of habitus, Bourdieu defines the source of change not in the subject but *in the generative grammar itself*, which is incorporated in the individual as a social actor.

(5) Bourdieu locates the source of social reproduction, however, at the level of the doxa, which accounts for the difficulty of transforming habitus, i.e. why the transformative potential of its generative grammar is not easily accessible to social actors. The inscribed acceptance of social relations as they are, those 'natural certainties' that generate consensus opinion about what is right, appropriate, desirable and so on, arise from the doxa (see Bourdieu, 1980; Liebau, op.cit., pp.77-78; Pfeffer, 1985, p.293).

I do not disagree with this definition of doxa, but the cultural meanings it comprises (for any given field) no more float weightlessly in social space than can the subject (as opposed to the social actor) play the role of the magician who,

inexplicably for sociologists, pulls the unexpected rabbits out of hats. In other words, although circumstances may foster or hinder social change, it is ultimately people, and not structures, who produce and reproduce those circumstances and who (may) realise transformation. This is the case at the individual level of the subject, and it is no less so at the collective level of the doxa. At both levels, however, meanings are established and maintained through the *practices* of social life, and these practices are framed by structured power relations, from the point of view of this study, essentially by patriarchal relations. (6)

As for the question of specifying cultural codes themselves, I am not sure whether it is possible ever to do so within the limits of an empirically grounded science. I suspect that such specification must essentially remain intuitive, though supported by a wide range of 'circumstantial evidence' in which sociological analysis may not alone suffice. In the model developed here, the concept of code is understood in the simpler sense of describing the translations of elements of culture of femininity into their occupational expressions. At the historical-contingent level of the model, we can speak of the coding of gender locations according to their defining characteristics, i.e. code in the sense of a classification exercise. At the level of transitional dynamics, what we describe are the provisional outcomes of negotiations with the terms of gender relations as these operate in the unfolding circumstances and flow of people's lives.

Bourdieu's social theory is particularly useful in providing analytical instruments with which to chart multi-dimensionally the nature of social differentiations, divisions and their mechanisms of reproduction. The concepts of social space and of habitus are also useful because they offer the possibility of building up a mosaic without demanding that we have a pattern to work to in advance; the pattern can emerge in the course of the task itself, and it retains a provisional

quality. This is exactly how I proceeded in developing the model I use here.

On the other hand, Bourdieu's (rather elitist) approach to the normative subject and its formation means that his approach is not as fruitful when we are interested in processes of social and cultural reproduction, i.e. ontogenesis. As Liebau (op.cit., p.93) notes, Bourdieu's (perhaps restrictive) definition of *social* change involves a collective break with the established doxa, for which revolutionary movements are probably necessary. (7) However, Bourdieu's (1979) specification of the conditions under which *individual* change can occur is helpful. He offers three possibilities: through *social contact* (with other habitus forms, most commonly through educational institutions), through (personal) *crises* (which lead to questioning the previously taken-for-granted) and through *(self-)critical reflection* (essentially, the critical sociological perspective). This last has found an expression in the principles of decoding and empowering which are key concepts in the theory and practice of critical pedagogies (so, for example, as attempted through anti-sexist curriculum projects such as GAOC itself, see GAOC,1987). Social contact with other habitus is of interest to the extent that it is not widely experienced in other than distanced and institutionalised ways. The girls in this study, for example, go to schools where their peers largely come from similar backgrounds to their own; it is only schooling *as an institution* which confronts them with (not automatically attractive) alternative patterns of perceiving, thinking, evaluating and acting. However, everyone experiences crises, and I do not think these have to be overtly dramatic to be of relevance. Indeed, the status passages which are a core aspect of transitions are by their nature temporarily de-stabilising and are thus inclined to prompt subjects into questioning themselves and the circumstances in which they find themselves. This is, perhaps, how the concept of transition can help us to find a more productive way into the dynamics of social reproduction and transformation.

To return to the model at hand here, we might summarise its nature as follows. Firstly, the culture of femininity as a doxic field constructs gender semantic oppositions and contradictions of an orthodox character, i.e. with which girls struggle, but whose terms are contained within the framework of a gender code. It is the struggle which contains the seeds of potential transformation, not the elements or their interrelations as such. Secondly, historical-contingent conditions regulate how oppositions and contradictions may be resolved for given groups and individuals. These conditions specify the range of resolutions available and their specialisation for given cultural contexts. They thus prefigure the trajectories girls build up over time. Thirdly, transformation implies a substantive change in the construction of the culture of femininity as a doxic field, both at the level of the subject and in historical-contingent conditions.

We can now see that the terms of a gender code are defined by, or inferred through, the culture of femininity doxa, whereas gender locations represent historically specific legitimated positions and resolutions. Transitional dynamics integrate the subject and social context, enabling not only reproduction but also potential transformation. For most people, 'coming to terms with' the gender code is experienced and manifested as a process of accommodation towards gender locations in line with our (class, ethnic/racial, gender specific) familial, community and educational positionings and trajectories. 'Setting one's own terms' is but a partially (and differentially) realisable process for most of us, and one which builds the fragmented tensions into our lives and identities which can enkindle potential transformation.

2.3 The modalities of gender relations: cultural semantics, gender locations and dynamics

The theoretical content of the model presented here is qualified, in the first instance, by three limiting assumptions. These are, firstly, that all girls and women, whatever their social and cultural locations within and between other dimensions of social cleavage, are positioned within universal sets of production-reproduction contradictions. Secondly, whilst occupational translations are historically and culturally contingent, the relations of opposition which constitute the cultural field of femininity have a universal character (at least for western European cultures). Thirdly, a variety of positions, strategies and resolutions for coming to terms with lived contradictions are available to individual subjects. Although, in principle, all trajectories through this social space are open to all girls and women in contemporary industrial societies, social locations (ethnicity, race, religion, social class....) may act selectively on some gender locations, which then, for example, can be regarded as class-associated.

2.3.1 Cultural semantics: the field of femininity and its occupational translations

Social anthropology and cultural analysis in sociology share an enduring interest in the natures, structures and meanings of symbolic boundaries, whereby female:male and private:public consistently appear as axes of central cultural significance. This perspective informed our discussion in Chapter 1 (see in particular section 1.2) and underlies the construction of what is termed the cultural field of femininity.

The cultural field of femininity and its corresponding occupational translations are structured by a matrix of opposition and contradiction. Purity:pollution is a

fundamental opposition through which women are positioned both within production and reproduction. At the same time, production:reproduction places women in a fundamentally contradictory position through the concept of vocation. At a deeper level of cultural meaning, there is a fundamental relationship of equivalence between pollution and reproduction, and hence between purity and production. Nearer the surface structures of meaning, these relations of equivalence are reversed: production is polluting ('dirty' both materially and symbolically/morally); reproduction is purifying ('clean' similarly). The dimensions of these cultural semantics are contained in the relationships between the concepts of the madonna and the whore, or, occupationally, the nun and the prostitute.

The term 'vocation' implies 'one's most important activities' or 'that which is central in life' as distinct from what people engage in for the purposes of economic survival. (8) In the term's origin as a *calling*, a vocation is not something one chooses for oneself, rather *one is chosen*. If we now link vocation with gender and apply it to women's lives, a vibrancy is released with almost physically compelling cultural power. For women, paid work is not only a survival strategy in the usual sense - it may well be a strategy for personal survival, a means of securing some autonomy and a sense of self-worth in a culture which devalues women both intrinsically and for the labour they invest in the home. More crucially, women's paid work is intimately linked, in a multitude of ways, with their 'most important activity' (= their *vocation*): being a woman, which means actively reproducing gender relations, struggling to find themselves in a web of ideological filters and material circumstances. A woman's paid work, her occupation, is a dimension of her femininity - its creation, re-creation and momentary expression. Moreover, her work takes a back seat - by definition, it must - in the scheme of things. It recedes in the service of the greater vocation,

the reproduction of family life - and with this, the reproduction of patriarchal relations.

The vocation always implies elements of self-denial and sacrifice: in taking on the vocation of the reproduction of femininity at home and at work, women are indeed - usually more or less knowingly - sacrificing themselves. What is a mother, if not ready to sacrifice all for her children? What is a wife, if not prepared to place herself second to her husband? The sainthood-martyrdom complex gravitates uncomfortably near to the experience and interpretation of women's secular lives; the terms vocation, sacrifice and femininity stand in a gloomily powerful relationship to each other in the western cultural tradition. The archetypal vocational expression is the holy life, the nun - and it was the nunneries that gave women a major exit route out of the social reproduction of gender relations, whilst at the same time exacting the price of a sacrificial version of the cultural reproduction of femininity: the brides of Christ, shrouded and secluded, their escape from femininity transformed into its caricature.

The nunnery was equally a place where women could be themselves beyond the immediate grasp of worldly patriarchy, even if the heavenly version remained as a symbolic reminder of the real order of things. It could be a place where women had occupations and could practice them freely, not having to pretend to be an honorary male, as the *femmes soles* of the mediaeval trades were obliged to do. As in all arrangements which contain counter reproductive practices, this construct had its imperfections: nunneries were also places where women could be among women, could create out of overt sacrifice and submission a different social order based on collectivity, solidarity, co-operation and personal experience.

(9) It is clearly inaccurate to suggest that entering a nunnery automatically evidences resistance, or that nunneries in themselves function as a feminist

counter-culture. Nevertheless, where nuns did not and do not conform to normative expectations, the ways in which their resistance threatens the social order precisely through the double rejection of sacrifice and femininity are of some significance to an understanding of the reproduction of patriarchal relations.

(10) In sum: *the potential power of the vocation is kept under control by sacrificial femininity.*

To return to the oppositions and contradictions we identified at the outset of this section, we can readily see that their elements are held in place and legitimated by complementary discourses which combine to regulate the social forms of femininity. The equivalences can be stated thus:

purity	:	morality
production	:	economy
pollution	:	sexuality
reproduction:		family

In turn, each discourse relays the criteria for feminine image and practice as follows:

morality	:	respectability
economy	:	service
sexuality	:	attractiveness
family	:	nurturance

The final translation step would involve an indication of the occupational expressions of the cultural field of femininity for differing levels of aspiration and achievement. However, this is an enormous undertaking beyond the scope of the present research, so that I shall here offer *exemplars* only, using three broad levels

of occupational status for each of the criteria listed above. These exemplars are drawn from the occupational aspirations of the girls in this study (see Chapter 5 and Appendix VIII). The elements of the culture of femininity identified here can now be seen as ideological representations of patriarchal relations, which undergo a series of transformations until the surface realisation of an occupational choice is reached, as shown in Figure 2.2 (overleaf).

In principle it would be possible to find semantic equivalents for these occupational realisations of the culture of femininity. It would also be possible to extend the scope in terms of the proximity/distance of given occupations to given elements relative to a given social position. An example of what I mean here would relate to the differences between working class and middle class girls and women which have consistently emerged from various literatures (see Chapter 1, and also section 2.1 in this chapter). So we might hypothesise that the vocation is *dominantly* specified onto paid work for middle class women, but onto family work for working class women. The simple division into middle and working class is certainly too crude, however, and any differences will be tendencies rather than certainties. The different elements of the culture of femininity affect all women, but the point is that their composition and weighting will vary between social locations. We might, finally, want to look at the internal structuring of the elements we have identified, for this might well have some significance for identifying hidden forms of resistance. The early 'culture of femininity' studies hinted at this in their suggestion that teenage girls' adoption of an 'exaggerated' femininity could be read as resistance by withdrawal (McRobbie and Garber, 1976; McRobbie, 1978). Gaskell's (1975) high school girls ranked 'appearance' as that element most closely identified with the culture of femininity, which corresponds to the criterion of 'attractiveness' in the surface

Culture of femininity field of discourse			Occupational realisations : exemplars		
Gender Code Structure	Social Forms	Cultural Meanings	I	II	III
PURITY	MORALITY	RESPECTABILITY	Bank Clerk	Teacher	Lawyer
PRODUCTION	ECONOMY	SERVICE	Cook	Shopkeeper	Boss
POLLUTION	SEXUALITY	ATTRACTIVENESS	Hairdresser	Model	Film Star
REPRODUCTION	FAMILY	NURTURANCE	Nursery Nurse	Nurse	Doctor

——— Fundamental Pairing
 ~~~~~ Fundamental Contradiction  
 ..... Fundamental Opposition

Occupational Gender breaks here

Figure 2.2 Occupations and the culture of femininity

realisations identified here. This criterion translates back into the element of pollution, that quality which has been identified in numerous historical and anthropological studies as the source of male fears of women's reproductive power (see, for example, Douglas, 1966; Okely, 1975; Weideger, 1978). We could plausibly suggest that it is the element of pollution/sexuality/attractiveness which is the weakest link in the patriarchal construction of the culture of femininity. Girls' interest in occupations which are dominantly defined through this element *may* not be the unrelieved and unreflected capitulation to the status quo of gender relations that careers advisors (and sociologists) tend to assume. Certainly, occupations which fall into this category are in many ways the most intriguing, in that they are not necessarily directly placed within male/dominant and female/subordinate couples; they are least amenable to regulation through formal certification; and they never, of course, entail crossing the occupational gender boundary. We shall return to this point in Chapter 5, when we look at the patterns of occupational aspirations of the girls in this study.

### 2.3.2 *Gender locations : an initial classification*

Having considered the level of cultural semantics, we now turn to develop further the historical-contingent aspect of the model, in which sets of occupational choices take a place within a more widely defined range of patterns. These patterns describe the characteristic circumstances and orientations of girls occupying locations arranged in the social space of gender relations. These locations may be *positions*, divided into non-transforming and potentially transforming positions according to the degree to which they offer routes leading out of the terms of the gender code (i.e. out of the structures of meaning contained within the field of the culture of femininity). In other words, positions are arranged in social space according to their emancipatory potential.

Locations may also be *transitional* in nature. Such locations carry the potential of change towards either a *position* or a *resolution*. Transitional locations are characterised by discourses of unresolved terrain and by strategies which attempt to cope with the oppositions and contradictions of cultural semantics. *Resolutions* are similarly divided into non-transforming and potentially transforming categories, but for the present, the latter group remains an empty cell. The reason for this is that key gender locations were derived recursively, i.e. through an interaction between theorising and empirical data. For girls of the age-group studied (11-16) it would be unusual to find clear indications of potentially transforming resolutions (see section 2.3.3 below). Theoretically, it might also be argued that such resolutions can rarely be more than transitory and highly marginal unless macro-social change occurs (see section 2.2 here). I would wish to reserve judgement on this issue, but simply state that empirically I found no clear case of rejection of the terms of gender relations together with some indication of a projected alternative way of life. Non-transforming resolutions, however, are considered relatively stable locations, achieved by active reflection upon one's circumstances and options.

Positions, transitions and resolutions represent, then, possible specialisations within the social space defined by the terms of gender relations. They are not passive responses, but rather describe the modal range of possibilities and circumstances for girls in different social, cultural and educational contexts. Figure 2.3 (p. 78) shows the arrangement of gender locations within the space of gender discourse, and the notes which immediately follow provide summary definitions of the locations themselves. The origins of the gender locations included here are diverse. Some underly the interview data in the current study, enriched by earlier and related research I have carried out. Some draw upon



ideas underlying the surface of accounts found in the kind of literature reviewed earlier in this thesis. Some are intuited on the basis of the networks built up through the first two categories. The locations identified here are not meant to be exhaustive; indeed it would be most surprising if they were so. They represent an initial attempt to chart a map rather than its final contours.

#### Gender locations: summary definitions

**Note:** Those definitions given in italics are those which were primarily or wholly theoretically derived; those in standard print were derived recursively.

**A : Preconsciousness :** Unrecognised and hence unreflected acceptance of patriarchal relations in production and reproduction, resting on practical understandings drawn from a clearly bounded social world. Hypothetically, preconsciousness is a universal location of origin and is certainly increasingly a residual location for those who are not in a position to move beyond it. By 11/12 years of age, the characteristics of girls thus located suggest that structured social divisions (class fraction, race/ethnic origin,...) are heavily implicated in promoting/obstructing such movement and its 'scheduling'.

**B : Fatalism :** Largely unreflective submission to patriarchal relations in production and reproduction, resting on the principle of 'separate and unequal'. The location is consistently defined through the adoption of a patriarchal worldview in which pattern descriptions are androcentric, female and male activity spheres are separate, and women are deficient and subordinate to men. Male power and authority are thus legitimate and 'natural'. Fatalism is a form of consciousness readily transported through the gender code, specified onto working-class cultural traditions but differentially distributed over within-class fractions. In this study it is associated with the so-called 'lower' working-class, but accreting over time a wider membership as a form of retreat from engagement with structured contradictions in production-reproduction relations.

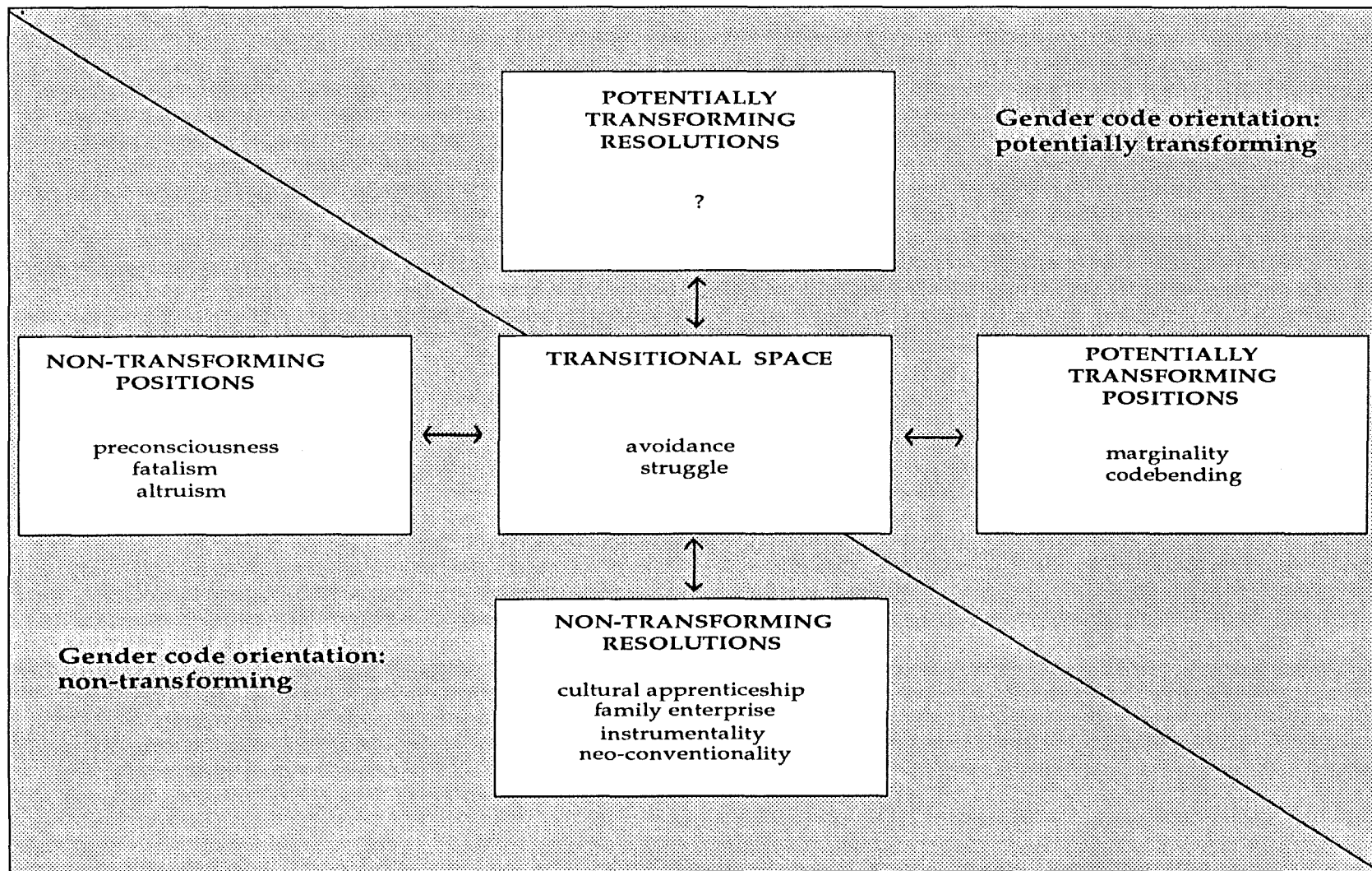


Figure 2.3 : A typology of gender locations

**C : Altruism :** *Largely unreflective submission to patriarchal relations in production and reproduction, resting on the principle of 'natural morality'. Worldview is analogous to fatalism, but with particular emphasis on a sacrificial commitment in the service of others. Altruism is a form of consciousness readily transported through the gender code, specified onto middle-class cultural traditions but differentially distributed over within-class fractions. An expected association is the 'Kleinbürgerkultur' emerging with industrialisation/modernisation.*

**D : Marginality:** Reflexive and potentially transforming position in relation to the gender code, facilitated by educational achievement and a distancing from clear-cut loyalties/traditions . In this study, high-achieving girls from ambiguous/complex social backgrounds (class, race/ethnic, family membership...) are characteristically located here. The commitment to meritocratic individualism and equal opportunities combined with a degree of social marginality fosters sharper challenge to patriarchal relations in both production and reproduction; but structured inequalities of opportunity in education by themselves severely reduce many such girls' chances of attaining their aspirations, in addition to the pressures favouring ultimate drift towards accommodative resolutions.

**E : Codebending :** Reflexive and potentially transforming position in relation to the gender code, facilitated by educational achievement and cultural capital, but of a nature which directs educational-occupational decisions into somewhat more potentially accommodative channels. Critical awareness of gender divisions is more highly developed for production than for reproduction, but in this study, the spectrum of occupations to which girls from the achieved middle-class fraction are nearest in cultural terms are the liberal and public service professions. Such girls are well-situated to achieve their aspirations, but their corresponding likely future production locations together with commitment to the primacy of mothering point towards ultimate drift towards accommodative resolutions.

**F : Avoidance :** As a transitional location, avoidance is rooted in conflicting messages and structured contradictions, but by definition has relatively weak prospects for productive challenge. It comprises surface, if ambiguous, acceptance of gender divisions in production and (more so) reproduction with underlying hesitant reflection, anxiety and a sense of powerlessness surrounding disjunctions between interests/aspirations and the chances of realising these educationally and occupationally. In this study, it is a transitional location in which working-class girls of indigenous UK origin are likely to be found, where primary or secondary habitus do not provide a secure basis for educational 'success'.

**G : Struggle :** As a transitional location, struggle is rooted in conflicting messages and structured contradictions; it encompasses relatively good prospects for productive challenge to patriarchal relations because the tensions are expressed and struggled with more openly and actively. In this study, it is strongly associated with subjects caught in competing awareness and solidarity traps between gender, class and especially race/ethnicity. The direction of development of critical consciousness in relation to these major dimensions of social cleavage varies according to immediate cultural and educational contexts. Gender divisions in production/reproduction are recognised and subject to critical reflection and challenge, but whilst both patriarchal ideologies and practices in the production are rejected, conventional understandings of women's role in reproduction are retained. The separation is especially marked for the girls of minority origin in this study. Hence, intense contradiction arises between the principles of achievement (in

education and production) and of ascription (in reproduction).

**H : Cultural apprenticeship :** Critically reflexive but specifically constrained accommodative form of consciousness, encapsulated in the principle of 'separate and equal'. Positive acceptance of class-based community tradition entails subordination or submerging of gender divisions in favour of class solidarity in production; positive valuation of femininity permits critical consciousness of gender divisions in reproduction; the ideological separation of female/male worlds and class solidarity hinders the extension of critical consciousness to production/reproduction relations. In this study, girls from old-established indigenous skilled/entrepreneurial working-class communities occupy this location, which essentially reproduces a cultural fraction currently subject to long-term attrition as a consequence of economic and social change.

**I : Instrumentality :** *Resolves the tensions and contradictions in production/reproduction relations by rejection of patriarchal ideologies but submits to its structures and practices. Resistance to the latter is judged as unpromising given the realities of gendered power distribution and a worldview centred on individualism; the resolution entails playing the system as successfully as possible on its own terms. It is not necessarily class-associated, but is expected to be more closely allied to 'new' working-class cultural fractions.*

**J : Neo-conventionality :** *Resolves the tensions and contradictions in production/reproduction relations by rejection of patriarchal structures and practices in production but submits to these in reproduction, bolstered by commitment to the centrality of family roles. Ranging from the familiar 'two roles' to 'Superwoman' images of modern woman, the resolution entails an attempt to satisfy multiple and conflicting prescriptions; it inevitably reproduces, i.e., gender-differentiated vertical and horizontal labour force distribution. Neo-conventionality is not necessarily class-associated, but is more closely allied to achieved middle-class cultural fractions.*

**K : Family enterprise :** *Critically reflexive but specifically 'constrained' consciousness, encapsulated in the principle of 'negotiated partnership' but within the terms of patriarchal relations. Acceptance of gender divisions in production/reproduction relations is an integral prerequisite for a collective economic and social family strategy. It may be found in cultural fractions across and within class and race/ethnic groupings.*

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### 2.3.2.1 Gender locations : a brief discussion

When we were little, playing explorers, we hadn't noticed that there were many jobs that only men did. Later on, the space vacated by the explorer remained empty, partly because girls weren't encouraged to think in terms of work as a means of achievement or self-expression; partly because *the choice against which one had to match one's own inclinations and enthusiasms was so limited*...I...had decided to stay on and take A-levels [partly] because it meant you could put off making the decision about what you were going to do with your life. (Ingham, 1981, pp.80-1, my emphasis)

What the gender locations look like empirically can be better appreciated through the data analysis itself (in Chapter 4). I want here to raise some of the general issues which arise in thinking about occupational choice in this way. Exclusionary practices which constrain women's range of *expression* in both production and reproduction spheres are both material and ideological in character. If we survey patterns of occupational aspirations/expectations, we know that the range of *legitimate* expressions within the terms of gender relations are limited, so that *women are not empowered freely to express themselves*. To uncover the range of *girls' potential*, we must direct our attention to that which lies beneath the surface realisations, and so I have searched for different kinds of social identities and social positions, whose specific voices are channelled into standardised expression. Where these realisations are read as 'true', the social reproduction of patriarchal relations is generally assured, simply because the range of realisation cannot express the diversity of the voices. This does not imply that empowering the voices of itself produces emancipation. It is more a question of whether potentially transforming gender locations can actually lead to productive transformation without macro-level social change too.

As a consequence of social context and educational experience, girls find themselves placed in, are driven into, adopt, settle for, or achieve these locations. Movement between locations is possible, and does empirically occur, but not

wholly freely or at random. One way of looking at these dynamics is through the tension between collectivity and individualism as principles of social solidarity, realised through the competing systems of hierarchical social differentiation in which girls are entangled. In this study that tension was empirically expressed through the oppositions between gender/race/class solidarities against status-lifestyle/ meritocracy-effort/equality of opportunity effected through and located within individuals. It would appear that the only *legitimated* access route through to potentially transforming positions is via the latter, i.e. via adoption of individualism over collectivism. We must in any event pose the uncomfortable question: is 'individualism' (see here Beck, 1986) a necessary (if not sufficient) prerequisite to the breakdown of patriarchal relations? I have no means of reliably answering this question, but it remains an important one to ask.

As far as surface realisations are concerned, the gender locations are associated both with distinct clusters of occupational choices and with types of transition biographies (see Chapters 5 and 6). These latter document and chart both stability and change in subjects' trajectories over the three years of the study. In practical terms, it ought ultimately to be possible, given sufficient information, to locate subjects fairly accurately and to make reasoned assessments of the particular problems they are facing and coming to terms with during this critical transition period. Only then can we begin to formulate more appropriate positive support systems. Accommodative resolutions will continue to dominate in relative terms, but the labour market allows for more and less favourable versions of these in occupational and opportunity terms. Given the nature of real opportunity structures, there is bound to be a gradual attrition from potentially transformative positions into accommodative resolutions over time, so that support in 'maintaining the line' is important. There are points in some trajectories which offer the possibility of shifting away from accommodation into potential trans-

formation; these moments might be better recognised and supported.

However, the gender locations specified in the model are all legitimate within the existing social formation, if not universally and unconditionally so. The marginality and codebending locations certainly *threaten* aspects of the existing terms of gender relations, but their transformatory potential is contained by their legitimacy within the *provisional* social world of the educational system. In the 'real world' of production/reproduction relations they are difficult to maintain. This is the point at which we turn to the level of transitional dynamics.

### 2.3.3 *The dynamics of the 'gendered career'*

In this final section, we consider the question of shifts between gender locations across time. Such shifts plot the trajectories girls may construct as they negotiate production/reproduction relations through educational-occupational choice processes, which themselves are embedded within girls' 'transition biographies'. Not all girls shift; stability is feasible. For some gender locations, stability is more likely than for others. Similarly, some trajectories are more likely to occur than are others.

In the first instance, we need to specify the theoretically feasible range of possibilities for shift through the social space defined by the model. Figure 2.4 (p.86) shows five possible types of shift, which are based on a number of (mainly) theoretically grounded assumptions. These are:

1. Individuals must pass through transitional space in order to shift
  - (a) in either direction between non-transforming (A,B,C) and potentially transforming (D,E) positions;
  - (b) between positions of any kind (A,B,C,D,E) and resolutions of any kind (H,I,J,K).

We have noted earlier that transitional locations are characterised by discourses of unresolved terrain and by strategies which attempt to cope with lived oppositions and contradictions. The theoretical perspective adopted here also implies that shifting locations across major internal boundaries of social space requires active critical reflection. Transitional locations are defined by implicit or explicit recognition of and struggle with structured contradictions, which means that they represent moments of 'crisis.' (11)

2. Individuals must be placed in or attain a potentially transforming position (D,E) before shift into potentially transforming resolutions ('?')

Cultural and social resources are needed to support a potentially productive challenge to the terms of gender relations. These provide individuals with more flexibility of decisionmaking and action; they also provide a formal measure of legitimation and tolerance when girls try to turn possibilities into realities. In contemporary societies, the most important source of legitimation and tolerance is that secured through the acquisition of educational qualifications. As we have seen, research clearly suggests that it is educational achievement which is linked most closely to an egalitarian orientation towards gender relations; this offers the potential for planning and realising alternative ways of life. (12)

3. Shifts away from non-transforming resolutions (H,I,J,K), once reached, are not very likely within age-stage. Additionally, cultural apprenticeship is an example of a particularly stable resolution location, strongly bounded by primary habitus features.

This is essentially an empirically grounded assumption, grounded in the trajectories of the girls in this study, but it is buttressed in two ways. Firstly, the wider literature suggests that girls who have opted for 'conventional' gendered transitions in adolescence are prompted to 'look again' at their lives *after* marriage and children rather than before. They are then typically faced with a crisis of isolation



and dependence as mothers of young children, followed by the experience of difficulty in returning to satisfying and appropriate paid employment. Secondly, the institutionalised structures of youth transitions (subject specialisation, narrowly focussed vocational courses, lack of alternative progression and certification routes) mean that it is very difficult to re-open closed doors or to switch tracks once decisions have been made. School pupils are 'processed through' to the adult labour market at 21+; and then generally left to their own devices.

The actual patterns of shift found for the sample of 11-14 and 14-16 year old girls in this three-year study are considered in Chapter 6. The discussion here is rather in terms of expectations, given the preceding theoretical discussion. Empirically, there are some gender locations for which this study's sample provide no cases (altruism, family enterprise). Further, analytically, there are some gender locations which were not fully drawn into the data analysis (neo-conventionalism and instrumentalism). (Chapter 4 explains the reasons for these features.)

We now turn to a brief consideration of the five types of possible shift shown in Figure 2.4 (on p.86). (The reasons why such shifts are more/less likely for particular gender locations are discussed immediately below.) Firstly, Types I and II describe simple, one-stage movements into or out of transitional locations. Resolutions are by definition (provisional) outcomes, so that shifts back into transitional space are less likely to follow on (within a given age-stage, as noted earlier). Transitional space is by definition 'unstable', so that shifts in any direction could be expected to occur. Secondly, Types III and IV describe simple shifts within the major categories of the model, i.e. within the fields of non-transforming positions, potentially transforming positions, transitional space, and non-transforming resolutions. Thirdly, Type V(a) describes complex shifts in which individuals change location 'frequently.' For this study, that means

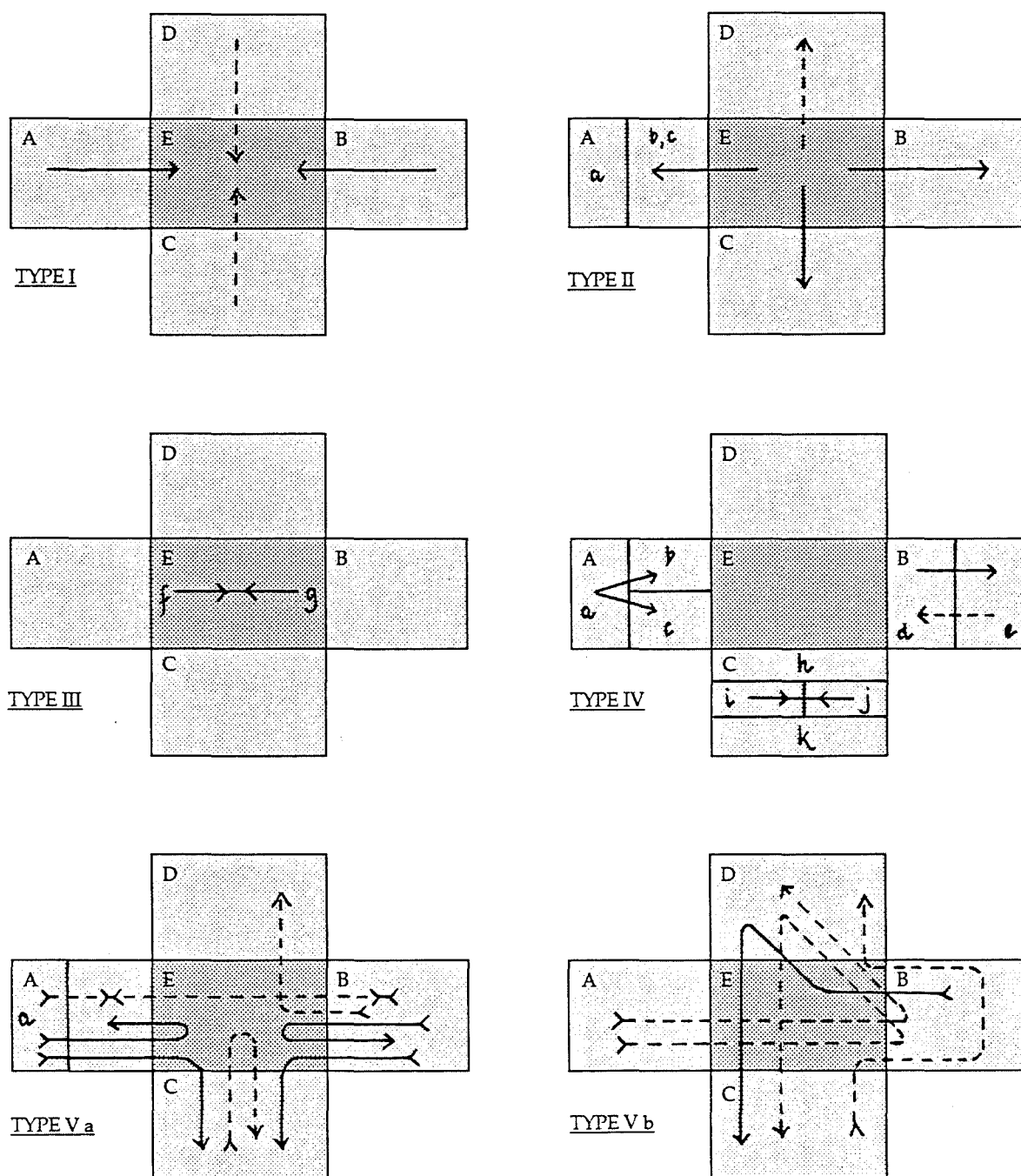


Figure 2.4 : Gender locations : types of possible shifts

**Key**

direction of shift > <

two way shift <—>

feasible but theoretically less likely shift, *incl.*

potential shift into/through potentially transforming resolutions

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TYPE I : simple, one-stage shift into transitional space

TYPE II : simple one-stage shift out of transitional space

TYPE III: shifts within transitional space

TYPE IV: shifts between gender locations, but within sector

TYPE V : complex shifts between locations and sectors

small case letters: gender location categories (as shown on pp.77-80)

capital letters: sectors in gender discourse as in Figure 2.3 (p.78)

allocation to a different gender location at each of three annually spaced interviews. Finally, Type V(b) gives examples of complex shifts which *could* occur were we to study girls/women at ages and in contexts where potentially transforming resolutions were both more likely and empirically present. The only such *likely* trajectory would be one which led from a potentially transforming position through transitional space into a potentially transforming resolution and then out again towards a non-transforming resolution (via transitional space). I would most expect to find examples of such trajectories for highly educated women who have consciously engaged with feminist thought and practice, but who have ultimately been channelled into leading more 'conventional' lives by the psychic and practical stresses of living an alternative, non-legitimated lifestyle.

We can now relate the likelihood of particular trajectories within the types of possible shift discussed above to the natures of the gender locations themselves, as these find their expression in gendered transitions across the secondary school years.

As *starting-points*, non-transforming and potentially transforming positions are very much linked to primary habitus (family and milieu). Unless secondary habitus (education) intervenes significantly to amend these framing conditions, it is *relatively unlikely* that girls will move from non-transforming positions (pre-consciousness, fatalism, altruism) to potentially transforming positions (marginality, codebending) during the years of secondary schooling (or vice-versa).

Fatalism and altruism are locations both of origin and of destination, (13) but preconsciousness is by its very nature a location of origin and not of destination (although over a given period of study, some girls may remain here). One

possibility might be that preconsciousness is a starting-point for all girls, but that over time girls in different social and cultural locations can (but may not) start to move away from it in different directions according to the kinds of resources available to them. Those who have reached a potentially transforming position by the age of 12 (as some girls in this study had) have evidently begun to diverge much earlier than have other girls. (14)

The model has identified four non-transforming resolutions (family enterprise, cultural apprenticeship, neo-conventionality and instrumentality). These might be subdivided according to the role played by family and milieu. Cultural apprenticeship, for example, is a resolution which reflects a collective solidarity principle: girls are positively expected to take their place within an established community and family way of life. As such, it is a 'hermetic' location. Neo-conventionality and instrumentality, on the other hand, are more individualised and universalistic accommodations.

We have already described the transitional locations (avoidance, struggle) as provisional in quality. Some girls may remain in transitional space longer than others - perhaps because they cannot yet decide on or find an exit route, perhaps because they are facing more complex problems than others are. In principle, all girls *may* travel through transitional locations at some point.

We have also already referred to potentially transforming positions (marginality, codebending) as subject to attrition over time since they are the hardest to maintain. There will be pressures to push these girls to the periphery, for example, by defining them as exceptions or abnormalities. Such pressures can, of course, reinforce commitment rather than weaken it, and those who become accustomed to social marginality gain personal resources to cope with its conse-

quences. Educational achievement is clearly important for maintaining potentially transforming locations in the secondary schooling years, given the formal principle of equality of opportunity which legitimates schooling as the medium for social selection/allocation for the majority. (15)

#### *2.4 Concluding remarks*

In this study, the most complex and vibrant trajectories that emerged came from girls who were subject to a range of structurally framed cross-pressures associated with their gender, class and ethnic cultural milieu, family situation and strategy, and educational environment. These girls' 'stories' embody a strikingly exposed juggling of the tension between primary and secondary habitus oppositions. Such girls were not, however, in the majority. Equally as striking is the extent to which so many were trapped inside a world that did not succeed in releasing and fostering their potential or a positive, active subjectivity. These girls had little opportunity to develop and to exercise critical reflection and a sense of agency, and their transition biographies show this only too well.

I opened this chapter by writing that my aim was to map and to understand the mythology of occupational choice. The model that I went on to present is how I came to do so; I have tried to provide the beginnings of a more systematic and sensitive basis for studying the gendered patterns of these processes. In this sense, the model is intended to contribute to a more differentiated approach to gendered youth transitions in which we no longer have to see girls simply as victims or heroines, but rather as active subjects trying to find a reasonably firm foothold in a rather harsh world.

In the first instance, there is no alternative but to describe the bare bones of such models, so that others can see and evaluate their nature. Skeletons are real enough, but rather disconnected, subjects. Theoretical constructions can thus seem to have materialised out of thin air, rather like Prospero's pageant, which left 'not a breath behind.' This model, however, draws its breath from the process of empirical research, the very stuff of the pageant. This study of early adolescent girls across three years of their secondary schooling contributed formatively and summatively to the theory which, in written form, precedes it. Similarly, the analysis of the data has acted as an empirical field for exploring the model's scope and usefulness in understanding girls' orientations, aspirations and trajectories. The next chapter, then, describes the social and educational contexts of the girls studied. This provides us with background information to proceed with the empirical mapping of the gender locations which follows in Chapter 4. Both of these chapters are particularly relevant to the historical-contingent level of the model. Chapter 5 looks directly at the girls' occupational choices, and is particularly relevant to the exploration of cultural semantics. Finally, Chapter 6 traces the dynamics of educational-occupational choice processes as these are expressed through the girls' transition biographies.

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#### Footnotes

1 The problem with this metaphor is that it implicitly reifies social structure and process as if these had a life of their own. Nevertheless I have found no better phrase to express the sense of active struggle between subjects and the circumstances of the social world, whose influence upon choices and constraints cannot sensibly be reduced to an interactionist, phenomenological perspective on the production and reproduction of social reality.

2 Tangri (1972) similarly found that 'role innovators' (cf. also Chapter 1, footnote 14) evidenced 'later closure in choice of occupation'. They were also full of self-doubts and not likely to see themselves as 'successful'. I would argue that this critical stance towards the self fuels a sense of marginality which can lead to challenging the terms of gender relations (more) effectively. Certainly this is indicated in the findings of the current study (cf. Chapter 4).

3 In the Boston study Gaskell tried to measure sex-role ideology systematically by dividing it up into four different components and conducting a path analysis. The components appear to have been intuitively derived, and the research instruments used to measure them were drawn from a variety of sources. For example, the measures for power relations between the sexes (termed male dominance ideology) and for the domestic division of labour (termed domestic ideology) were those developed by Lois Hoffman (1960) in her work on husband-wife relations. Gaskell factor analysed responses to attitude statements representing the four sex-role ideology components with four background variables (educational aspirations, occupational aspirations, occupational commitment and marital commitment). The measures for these latter set of variables are not especially subtle, though the findings remain of considerable interest. The Vancouver study is based on a more clearly worked-through social reproductionist perspective and uses in-depth interviewing for data collection. Taken together, this sequence of valuable studies offer a developing argument and cumulative material for closely-related questions elicited through different research methods.

4 Gaskell argues that such struggles are actively reflective even for that minority of girls who apparently accept traditionalism uncritically. This is reminiscent of Anyon's view that even a turning-away or withdrawal is an active process within forms of accommodation and resistance (1983, p.33). I would agree with this, but I do not think that all instances of uncritical acceptance of traditionalism can be so considered. The findings of the current study do not support it, in any event (see Chapters 4 and 6).

5 The 'social actor' is understood by Bourdieu as a (majority) sub-set of the 'subject', as the very embodiment of the social condition. The individual 'is' the manifestation of the social ('die Individuum gewordene Gestalt von Gesellschaft', Liebau, 1987, p.61).

6 There is considerable scope here for a critique of Bourdieu's work on the grounds that he, like most social theorists, privileges class analysis over other forms of structured social divisions. Such a critique is not material to the argument of this thesis, but there are two points I would nevertheless like to note in this context, since Bourdieu's theoretical (if not his empirical) androcentrism is a subtler one than most. Firstly, his definition of social class is sufficiently broad-based to be able to incorporate 'sex' (Bourdieu never uses the term gender, or at least, his translator does not do so) as a central defining factor, but one which remains 'subsidiary' to the anchor variable of position in the relations of production (see Bourdieu, 1984, pp.102,106). His definition thus continues to marginalise *production-reproduction* relations of inequality. When Bourdieu talks of occupation as the most effective empirical discriminant for the purposes of defining and describing habitus, he therefore misses the fundamental implications of the gender of its incumbent. Socially, a woman's occupational position is linked inextricably with the field and mode of reproduction as well as of production; culturally, a woman's occupational position is enmeshed in the culture of femininity. Secondly, Bourdieu comments quite accurately that femininity is differently constituted and realised in different class fractions, so that gender and class are inseparable properties of social positions and their associated habitus (ibid., pp.107-8). But he fails to add that all these constitutions and realisations take place within patriarchal structures. Beyond the distribution and reproduction of economic and cultural capital in social space, there is a further space defined by other forms of capital which are distributed and reproduced according to the logic of gender divisions. An interaction between historical-specific modes of production and of reproduction certainly takes place, but I fail to see any a priori reason for according a dominant role to the former as opposed to the latter. In other words, Bourdieu needs at the very least another dimension to his lifestyle maps. It is not enough simply to use the empirical patterns of the domestic division of labour by

sex in middle class and working class families as nothing more than indicators of class-differentiated habitus (as in, for example, his exposition of cooking styles, *ibid.*, pp.183-200). The most useful recent theoretical discussions of gender as a structurally constituted category can be found in Beer (1987, 1990), Becker-Schmidt (1989) and Knapp (1989).

7 Such movements are, in his view, precipitated by large-scale political or economic crises which significantly affect the life-chances of identifiable social groups: "Everything suggests that an abrupt slump in objective chances relative to subjective aspirations is likely to produce a break in the tacit acceptance which the dominated classes - now abruptly excluded from the race - previously granted to the dominant goals, and so to make possible a genuine inversion of the table of values" (Bourdieu, 1984, pp.167-8). In the context of the current disintegration of the eastern European socialist states, this view prompts some reflection. One question that arises, for example, in the rapid transition to market economies is the effect that the likely reduction in the availability of childcare, family benefits and parental leave arrangements will have upon the relationship between women's objective chances and subjective aspirations where their full integration into the paid workforce has long since been taken for granted.

8 For the majority of people 'work' is much more a matter of survival than of 'central life interest' (a term coined in relation to industrial workers' worlds by Dubin, 1963). 'Work' in this sense has usually been taken to mean gainful employment, but the distinction holds equally for domestic labour as it does for, e.g., factory production. Most will certainly try to arrange their work so that it can be got through as painlessly or as pleasurably as possible, but in no sense could work activity be termed a central life interest for many, regardless of the effect of the 'work ethic' whose (apparent) demise has been the subject of some agitated debate amongst youth researchers (see Chisholm, 1990; Zoll, 1991 forthcoming).

9 The contemplative orders had their place: as the quiet companions of the raucous universities, they provided a space for female intellectual expression, albeit silent, in contrast to the noisier knowledge construction and demolition sites in secular life, where men, then as now, dominated the building trade. Neither the vocation nor the contemplative orders are in principle and practice restricted to women, although historically and today women outnumber men in holy orders (cf. Vermehren, 1985). Without casting aside parallels between monks and nuns, monasteries and nunneries, the subordination of the latter to the former cannot be ignored; and the involvement of the monasteries in the exercise of power/authority in secular life is a defining feature of European society in the middle ages. What is important here is that the material and symbolic functions of monasteries for men may be interesting, but in terms of the reproduction of gender relations not of like significance.

10 See, for example, Chaucer's laid-back ridicule of the Prioress (Canterbury Tales, Prologue). If nuns represent one of the boundaries for the displacement of femininity under patriarchy, then prostitutes represent the other. The nun sublimates female sexuality within morality and attains purity; the prostitute sublimates morality within female sexuality and becomes polluted. But both serve men: nuns symbolically, prostitutes materially. Similarly, both are dangerous for the reproduction of gender relations if the displacements they represent are not contained through sacrificial femininity. The nun sacrifices the material expression of femininity (as understood in patriarchal society), and the prostitute sacrifices its symbolic expression.

11 The empirical frequency with which we might find girls at such moments must be seen for the present as an artefact of research design, dependent upon the number of times girls are interviewed, when they are interviewed in relation to institutionalised turning-points, and over what total period of time data collection



is planned. The three annual interviews which provided the data for the current study are but a resource-based technical compromise.

12 The identification of transforming resolutions deserves and requires independent theoretical and empirical consideration. The character of this study does not readily lend itself to that task; it is oriented towards understanding the modalities of gender relations as these are realised in the 'world as it is'. It can be reasonably argued that understanding the character of transforming resolutions demands prior understanding of just this, of course.

13 The interview data show those who move into fatalism after having moved through transitional space to be on a trajectory of withdrawal from agency in the field of gender relations; but those who begin there, and especially who remain there, share primary and secondary habitus attributes.

14 The data available in this study cannot directly substantiate this proposition; but the interview analysis does suggest that whilst all the girls have voiced similar kinds of occupational aspirations at some point, over time certain groups of girls begin to move away from the general undifferentiated pattern of aspirations, whereas other groups have not done so.

15 The hiatus of tolerance enjoyed by high-achieving girls is reflected in the interview data, but equally there is evidence of attrition from potentially transforming positions as girls are unseated by relative achievement shifts and by the contradictions between gender/class/ethnicity-race that they individually face.

### 3 The sample in social and educational context

This chapter has two purposes. Firstly, it 'places' the girls who are the subject of this research. The chapter therefore begins by describing the study's design and its sample. (Later chapters give additional information of this kind where necessary.) This is followed by brief accounts (1) of the three schools from which the sample was drawn, which indicate the differences between them as social and educational environments. All three schools serve primarily working-class neighbourhoods and pupils, but on closer inspection they are not 'the same kind of' school. Secondly, in this chapter we look at patterns of employment and occupation for the girls' parents and (where present) for their elder siblings, the majority of whom were aged between 16 and 21 during the period of study. The information about parents and siblings comes from the girls themselves - from what they told us in interview. This range of information exposes the internal differentiations within what is a largely working-class sample, but it also shows the extent to which gender and class divisions are being reproduced between these parents and their children. (2) At the same time, this information indicates the kind of knowledge and experience to which the girls in the study had closest access when considering their own prospects.

#### *3.1 Research design and sampling procedures*

The larger GAOC project (in which this study was embedded) was concerned to initiate and support anti-sexist curriculum action. Curriculum action was undertaken in two of the three ILEA comprehensive schools from which the interview sample was drawn, i.e. in one co-educational school ("Wilhelma") and in the girls' school ("Dame's Trust"). In these two schools, the forms which provided the interview respondents were not those in which curriculum action took place. In

other words, the interview response is not directly potentially contaminated by girls' participation in an anti-sexist curriculum project, although it is obvious that cross-form pupil interaction meant that some interview respondents had heard that 'something about girls and jobs' was going on in another form. In the second co-educational school ("Sternrise") no curriculum action was initiated. (3)

All three schools have a working-class intake profile. They draw most of their pupils from their local neighbourhoods, though their popularity varies. These *schools* were not randomly selected. At that time (1982/3), the ILEA's Research and Statistics Branch vetted applications for research access to schools. In the case of the GAOC project, this meant that those comprehensives regarded as already participating in research investigations and those which were judged to be in a 'difficult' phase were excluded from the outset. (4) The relatively small list of potential schools which resulted from this process represented a reasonably scattered middle ground of ILEA comprehensives; those with the 'best' reputations were already involved in a variety of initiatives, and those with the 'worst' were excluded anyway. The schools which ultimately agreed research access did so voluntarily and after discussion amongst the teaching staff; some schools which were approached declined to participate, for a variety of reasons.

Under the circumstances, it was impossible to make any systematic attempt to ensure adequately sized groups for comparison on the basis of specific minority group membership. The schools in fact differ markedly in their pupil profiles by race/ethnic background. Wilhelma is an almost wholly 'white indigenous' school; Sternrise is primarily 'white indigenous' but with a scattering of pupils from a variety of minority groups; Dame's Trust is highly ethnically-mixed. Additionally, Asian girls were not drawn into the interview sample. There were virtually no Asian girl pupils at either Wilhelma or Sternrise, the two co-educational schools. Approx-

imately a quarter of the first-year forms at Dame's Trust came from Asian, largely Muslim, backgrounds. A significant proportion of these girls had a poor command of spoken English, and the project did not have the resources to overcome that obstacle, quite apart from lack of research team experience in establishing productive and non-damaging research relations with such girls.

Initially, a cross-sectional interview sample of 61 girls was drawn from first and third year forms in each of the three schools ("the 1984 sample"). The first interviews took place in spring 1984; for the follow-through sub-sample ( $N = 37$ ), second and third interviews were conducted in spring 1985 and spring 1986. (5) Respondents were thus aged 11/12 ("the younger group") or 13/14 ("the older group") in 1984. For the older group, interviews were placed shortly following option choice decisions. Those of the younger group selected into the follow-through sub-sample were 13/14 years old and in their third year of secondary schooling by the time of the last interview, which was once more placed following option choice decisions. The older sub-sample were aged 15/16 and in their fifth year of secondary schooling by 1986; these interviews were placed before the Easter school holidays to avoid intruding into examination revision and leave periods.

The forms which supplied the interview sample were randomly taken from the first and third year cohorts in Dame's Trust and Wilhelma schools. At Sternrise, the Head was initially reluctant to permit research access to 'low-ability' forms ("the B-stream"), but teaching staff took a different view, so that the interview sample from Sternrise was eventually drawn from an 'A' and a 'B' stream form for each of the two year groups.

Within the forms themselves, the 1984 interview respondents were also randomly selected. To compensate for widely differing class size between schools and year

cohorts, the numbers drawn from each class were varied to produce roughly comparable school/year clusters. So, for example, in Wilhelma form size is much smaller than in either Dame's Trust or Sternrise. This reflects both its isolated location and its unpopularity with parents beyond the immediate catchment area. Sample size was determined on the basis of two criteria : firstly, numbers capable of delivering an adequate and manageable follow-through sub-sample; secondly, of a size manageable within the personnel resources of the project. Table 3.1 shows the structure of the sample accordingly.

Table 3.1 The 1984 cross-sectional interview sample

|                       | Sample N | Form size<br>(girls) | Sampling<br>fraction |
|-----------------------|----------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Younger girls (11/12) |          |                      |                      |
| Wilhelma              | 9        | 11                   | 81.8                 |
| Dame's Trust          | 10       | 16[23](2)            | 62.5                 |
| Sternrise             | 12       | 24                   | 50.0                 |
| Total                 | 31       | 51                   | 60.8                 |
| Older girls (13/14)   |          |                      |                      |
| Wilhelma              | 9        | 10                   | 90.0                 |
| Dame's Trust          | 10       | 19[24](2)            | 52.6                 |
| Sternrise(1)          | 11       | 26                   | 42.3                 |
| Total                 | 30       | 55                   | 54.5                 |

(1) A and B streams are combined here

(2) Numbers in brackets refer to total class size; those non-fluent in spoken English were excluded from selection

The analyses in Chapter 4 and in the later sections (3.3. and 3.4) of this chapter use information provided by the 61 girls in the 1984 sample. Chapter 6 is exclusively concerned with the 37 girls who were thrice interviewed between 1984 and 1986 ("the follow-through sample"). These 37 girls are a theoretical sub-sample of those

Table 3.2 The 1984-6 follow-through sample

| Classification     | Wilhelma     |                | Dame's Trust |                | Sternrise (1) |                | Totals       |                |
|--------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
|                    | 1984<br>only | Sub-<br>sample | 1984<br>only | Sub-<br>sample | 1984<br>only  | Sub-<br>sample | 1984<br>only | Sub-<br>sample |
| preconsciousness   | 7            | 4              | 2            | 1              | 2             | 1              | 11           | 6              |
| fatalism           | 1            | 1              | 2            | 1              | 1             | 1              | 4            | 3              |
| 'transforming' (2) | 0            | 0              | 6            | 3              | 9             | 4              | 15           | 7              |
| avoidance          | 4            | 2              | 3            | 2              | 0             | 0              | 7            | 4              |
| struggle           | 1            | 1              | 2            | 2              | 2             | 1              | 5            | 4              |
| cultural apprent.  | 4            | 2              | 2            | 2              | 1             | 0              | 7            | 4              |
| instrumentality    | 1            | 0              | 0            | 0              | 1             | 1              | 2            | 1              |
| neo-convention.    | 0            | 0              | 0            | 0              | 1             | 1              | 1            | 1              |
| unclear A          | 0            | 0              | 1            | 1              | 2             | 1              | 3            | 2              |
| unclear B          | 0            | 0              | 1            | 1              | 0             | 0              | 1            | 1              |
| unclear C          | 0            | 0              | 1            | 1              | 4             | 3              | 5            | 4              |
| Totals             | 18           | 10             | 20           | 14             | 23            | 13             | 61           | 37             |

**Notes**

(1) A and B stream forms are combined here.

(2) This classification was afterwards split into marginality and codebending.

unclear A = uncertainty of allocation between non-transforming and transitional categories.

unclear B = uncertainty of allocation between transforming and resolving categories.

unclear C = uncertainty of allocation between transitional and resolving categories.

The typology which informed the sub-sample selection was discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.3.2

A sub-sample of 37 (19 younger and 18 older girls) was drawn for a target of 30 complete sets of data (= three interviews), to allow for attrition. 32 complete sets resulted; but some incomplete sets have been used in the analysis where appropriate. The 5 incomplete sets (2 from the younger group, 3 from the older) arise through leaving the school/area, illness or habitual absenteeism. 1 case was lost after the first interview (1984); 3 were lost after the second interview (1985); 1 has first (1984) and third (1986) interviews only.

61 girls interviewed in 1984. They were selected on the basis of classification into groupings after the first interview (see Chapter 4, section 4.1); these groupings are the origins of the 'gender locations' which are the subject of Chapter 4. (6) Theoretical sampling was used because the purpose of the follow-through interview study was to sample positions and not individuals. Therefore, examples from each identifiable grouping together with a spread across the schools (where possible) were included, as shown in Table 3.2 (on the preceding page). Numbers were again a function of practicability, and some allowance was made for sample loss (leaving the school, long-term absence, unforeseen access difficulties, etc.). Preference was given, where necessary, to those respondents with whom particularly good rapport or quality of response had been achieved in the first interview.

### *3.2 The schools: brief portraits*

#### *3.2.1 Wilhelma*

This small co-educational school is located in a depressed and also isolated London community which has a strong sense of its distinctiveness - especially of its past. The community retains clear norms and traditions both within the family and on the labour market. The steep decline of the local economy has destabilised traditional patterns of the division of labour by sex; the community has been particularly affected by the disappearance of male-dominated craft and manual trades. Those which offer the potential for self-employment, however (e.g. motor mechanic), still loom large in the boys' aspirations and (to a lesser extent) expectations. Parents, pupils of both sexes, and their teachers share the conviction that in the current climate, girls are in a more advantageous position than are boys in the transition from school to work and on the adult labour market. The girls themselves are locked firmly into gender/class reproduction processes; and they are inclined to dream of

a (secretarial) 'job in the City' as a pinnacle of desirability, although their expectations are markedly humbler.

The teaching staff see themselves as balancing on the sharp edge of Conservative Britain, as containing the consequences of widening economic, social and educational inequalities. In the face of the situation of many of their pupils both at home (seen as 'problem' families) and in their prospects (unemployment and small-time crime/delinquency), many teachers view what official schooling is trying to do as irrelevant at best. Parents are seen as uninterested in their children's schooling, frequently as openly hostile to formal education and bigoted in their general views. Wilhelma does not enjoy a 'good' reputation either academically or socially, either within the local community or in professional and administrative circles. For parents, however, there are few options within reasonable travelling distance. In addition, the criteria which are used to judge a school by professional outsiders are not always either accurate or just. Given that some staff have resigned into an understandable resentment and fatalism, on the whole the teachers are impressively committed to their "kids" in a holistic and caring way. Examination results are unlikely to be "good" in schools with this kind of profile; and the time/effort teachers invest in helping their pupils find training schemes or jobs is not reflected in the outcomes.

The school, like the community, is ethnically primarily white indigenous, though with significant proportions of second/third generation (im)migrants from Ireland, Scandinavia, and Scotland. There are few pupils of Asian or Caribbean parentage; a small but noticeable number of pupils have arrived fairly recently from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. Racist attitudes are widespread among both pupils and their parents, according to teachers' reports and our own field observations. There have been serious violent racist incidents in and around the school,



although the surface atmosphere is by no means as racially threatening as has been reported for elsewhere. One important reason, however, may be wholly negative: white dominance is so pervasive that minority group pupils try to fade into the wallpaper. Certainly classroom observation showed a predominant pattern of separation and distance between the white indigenous children and the 'rest', for both girls and boys, although some minority pupils had secured integration into a majority clique. Whilst teachers view the racism of the community with considerable concern, it would be reasonable to say that they are so overloaded with the range of educational and social problems they face in the school that they can do little more than control crises as these arise. Gender-based inequalities do not present themselves as an automatic priority either; the acceptance of the project into the school came thanks to a small group of women teachers highly-committed to ILEA anti-sexist policies and a liberal 'laissez-faire' Head reaching the close of his career. There was considerable opposition not only from those male staff who found anti-sexist policies and practice personally threatening (an ubiquitous phenomenon), but also from radical teachers who saw a focus on gender inequalities as deflection from the central problem of class inequalities. The problem of racism tended to be similarly subsumed, where responses moved beyond those of horrified helplessness.

### 3.2.2 *Dame's Trust*

A merger between a girls' grammar with a locally illustrious tradition and a girls' secondary modern created this single sex comprehensive, located in a depressed and distinctive part of London, not too far from Wilhelma School, although the communities they serve are not as similar as they appear at first sight. Of average size, Dame's Trust serves two major sections of the local community: working class families of longstanding residence, well-integrated into a characteristic local labour market of small businesses, self-employment and craft trades which has seen both

better and worse days; and minority ethnic group parents, especially of Asian and Muslim origin, who have lived in the area for widely varying lengths of time. The proportion of Asian and Muslim pupils per form varies from about 15-30%, with the numbers tending to decline in the upper forms. One of the main problems Dame's Trust faces is the relatively high proportion of such girls who speak little English and who are enclosed within traditions which restrict their opportunities to acquire it quickly and easily. Approximately one-fifth of the school's pupils are of West Indian, and occasionally West African, origin. Up to 15% per form come from other minority ethnic backgrounds, notably Cypriot/Greek and (more recently) Hong Kong Chinese/Vietnamese. Within the framework of a multi-culturalist policy, the staff have responded to this situation by amending the curriculum (e.g. community languages, world studies) and by encouraging a variety of extra-curricular activities (e.g. a steel band).

Dame's Trust has a good local reputation, both academically and socially. Its pupils come from quite a variety of social backgrounds, though very few are of middle-class origin. Girls' aspirations/expectations are also varied, but gender-typed subject specialisation prevails.

There is a split between the long-serving, more 'conservative' teachers and the newer, more 'progressive' ones who have joined the school since the merger. These latter would like to see more changes more quickly in curriculum and pedagogy, in philosophy and practice, than are evident or can be achieved. Staff talk of the 'tail' of old-fashioned secondary modern teachers unable to cope, but also of those who still believe in the old grammar school virtues, not recognising that the school and its pupils have changed. There was an interest in and a commitment to equal opportunities, which saw the project as offering resources and an opportunity for action. However, the Head controlled communication flow, policy formation and

decisionmaking quite firmly. Hence the nature and extent of change was not readily open to wide staff participation, and the factions within the staff frequently blocked each other's initiatives.

As in all the schools at the time, Head and teaching staff were sensitive to the rights and (presumed) wishes of their pupils' parents. (The falling rolls issue was then of immediate moment; schools were actively competing with each other for numbers and reputations, and the spectre of teacher redeployment had begun to take shape on the horizon.) This made conducting fieldwork a delicate business, both in terms of carrying through interviews on 'personal issues' (as the interviews were judged to be doing) and in securing basic background information about the pupils and their families. Of the three schools, Dame's Trust was both the most hesitant and the least forthcoming in these respects. The school staff were clearly trying to steer a reasonably rational and compassionate course through a very stormy educational sea in a bad local economic climate, with the disadvantage of a motley crew unfamiliar with each other and with the circumstances.

### 3.2.3 *Sternrise*

The largest of the three, Sternrise co-educational school also serves a mainly working-class community, located towards ILEA boundaries and not well-linked by public transport to the central parts of the metropolis. Before comprehensive reorganisation it had been run for many years by a headmaster of the old disciplinarian and academically-oriented tradition. The staff is long-established and predominantly 'conservative' in professional character. The current Head aimed to retain the school's good reputation for exam results and its 'well-behaved' pupils, but wanted to introduce some changes in line with ILEA policy, including an equal opportunities policy with accompanying 'moderate' action. There was significant

staff opposition to various of the 'radical' policies supported by the authority, including equal opportunities.

Sternrise is a largely white indigenous comprehensive and culturally assimilationist in atmosphere. Ethnic group minority pupil representation is scattered in nature. Pupils of Cypriot, Greek and Turkish origin are the most noticeable cluster. When staff consider the issue of racism at the school, they are most likely to focus on inter-minority group conflicts (e.g. between Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities) rather than indigenous-minority oppositions. There are few black and Asian pupils at Sternrise, which to some extent reflects the make-up of the immediately local neighbourhood (and there is a girls' school not far away). Second-language problems virtually never surface at Sternrise.

The majority of the pupils come from a wide spread of working-class families, including those fractions which have been variously termed in the literature as 'affluent workers', the 'new working class', etc. Pupils from middle-class professional backgrounds are also represented at Sternrise; they are a minority in total, but are overrepresented in the A-stream forms. The school operates a marked streaming system, placing the children in forms according to their entry ability bandings from the first. Streaming *by subject* does not begin until after option choice, through the division into O-level, CSE and non-examination teaching groups. Until then, pupils are taught (with minor exceptions) in their streamed form groups. The conventional split between academic and vocational tracks for pupils of different ability bands was a largely unquestioned curriculum principle, one which became explicit at option choice and which the pupils accepted (as did, presumably, their parents) as normal. Girls' aspirations/expectations remained predominantly gender-typed, but not necessarily low-level.

Sternrise was an extremely popular and oversubscribed school. Its pupils tended to see themselves as fortunate to have gained a place. The public relations work the pupils, especially the younger ones, put in for their school when talking to outsiders (for example, researchers) was sometimes almost uncanny. The teaching staff were committed to the school and its pupils, supporting the established academic and behavioural ethos and finding their main source of identity in their role as subject specialists. The school drew its legitimation from a mixed parent community in which 'respectable' working-class families looked to education as a means of securing upward social mobility or stability of economic position for their children. Their demands on Sternrise were therefore similar to those of the middle class professional parents who expected their children to stay into the sixth form and go into further/higher education as a matter of course.

### 3.3 *The girls' parents*

The school portraits suggest not only that these offer differing educational environments for their pupils, but also that the pupils themselves come from different social and community milieux. Here we explore these differences further by looking at parental employment and occupation.

#### 3.3.1 *Parents' jobs*

We begin by looking at the spread of parental employment over occupational sectors, which is shown in Table 3. (overleaf). (7) Wilhelma parents are represented in 12 sectors and there are some parents who were unemployed; Dame's Trust parents cover 14 sectors; Sternrise parents are found in 19 sectors. In reality, these distributions are those of *fathers'* employment. Mothers are distributed much more narrowly: for Wilhelma and Sternrise, over six sectors; for Dame's Trust, over nine

sectors. Furthermore, there is little overlap between mothers' and fathers' occupational sectors, i.e. mothers are employed in fewer and different sectors than are fathers. Equally, school differences in the sector spread of parental employment are differences between the sector spread of fathers' occupations. Virtually all mothers in the three schools are distributed over the same few sectors.

Table 3.3 The 1984 Sample : parental employment by school and sector

| School       | Sectors represented by respondent parents                      | Total N |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Wilhelma     | 05 13 17 23 26 28 33i 33ii 33iii 34 35<br>+Unemployed          | 12      |
| Dame's Trust | 05 10 13 15 19 20 21 26 28 29 33i 34<br>35 36                  | 14      |
| Sternrise    | 01 03 05 10 15 19 20 21 22 23 25 26<br>27 28 29 33i 33ii 34 35 | 19      |

**Notes to Table 3.3**

**Occupational sectors represented in the parent sample (with sample occupational titles)**

- 01 self-employed professionals (doctors, accountants, lawyers, architects, etc.)
- 03 administrators and officials/higher grade (senior civil servants, managers of large enterprises, headteachers, film directors, bank managers, senior armed forces officers, etc.)
- 05 administrators and officials/lower grade (primary school heads, police and customs officers, flight controllers, etc.)
- 10 salaried professional/lower grade (teachers, newspaper reporters, interpreters, social workers, nurses, etc.)
- 13 small proprietors (working owners of small shops and service agencies with fewer than 25 employees, e.g. pub landlords, cafe owners, building contractors, driving instructors, bakers)
- 15 technicians/lower grade (television installers, computer operators, BTel engineers, Gas/Electricity Board fitters, electricians etc.)
- 17 supervisors of manual employees/higher grade (armed forces NCOs, foremen in engineering, construction, communications and mining)
- 19 self-employed workers/higher grade (shopkeepers[e.g. newsagents, grocers], radio/TV repairers, jobbing skilled construction workers, photographers, office cleaning contractors, tenant publicans, etc.)

- 20 supervisors of manual employees/lower grade (foremen in warehousing, distribution, transport, chemicals and food products [e.g. BR platform/ticket inspectors, laundry supervisors, head messengers])
  - 21 non-manual employees in administration and commerce (receptionists, clerks, sales reps, vet and dental assistants, library assistants, etc.)
  - 22 skilled manual workers in manufacturing/intermediate grade (printers/compositors, watch repairers, armed forces ranks, shipyard riveters, sheet metal workers)
  - 23 skilled manual workers in construction (carpenters and joiners, painters and decorators, bricklayers)
  - 25 service workers/higher grade (hostel/home supervisors, nursery nurses, cooks, canteen supervisors, hairdressers, etc.)
  - 26 semi-skilled manual workers in manufacturing (machinists, light assembly, car workers, unspecified factory workers, process workers [e.g. chemicals, food])
  - 27 skilled manual workers in transport, communications and services, and extractive industries (train drivers and signalmen, coalminers and tunnellers, crane operators and bulldozer drivers, etc.)
  - 28 service workers/intermediate grade (shop assistants and secretaries, couriers, etc.)
  - 29 self-employed workers/intermediate grade (cabbies, insurance agents, bookmakers, window cleaners, key cutters, etc.)
  - 33i = 33/3112 skilled manual workers in transport, communications and services (railway guards, chauffeurs, delivery and long-distance lorry drivers, bus drivers, etc.)
  - 33ii = 33/3204 semi-skilled manual workers in transport, communications and services (warehousemen, packers, postmen and roundsmen, gardeners, etc.)
  - 33iii = 33/3301 unskilled manual workers in transport, communicationd and services (dock labourers and similar)
  - 34 service workers/lower grade (caretakers, switchboard operators, car park attendants, bar and restaurant staff, airline cabin staff, schools auxiliary staff, etc.) (8)
  - 35 unskilled manual workers (general labourers, furniture removers, kitchen porters, cleaners, dustmen, roadsweepers, messengers, etc.)
  - 36 self-employed workers/lower grade (street vendors, leaflet/newspaper distributors, etc.)
- 

The overlap sectors are highly predictable. In Sternrise, four mothers (all teachers) and one stepfather (a community worker) were employed in lower-level salaried professional occupations. At Wilhelma, five fathers and one mother were unemployed; and one set of parents shared a pub tenancy. There is greater overlap (six sectors) amongst Dame's Trust parents. Two sets of parents run shops together; one father (a security guard) finds himself amongst the lower-grade service workers, a sector otherwise *wholly* populated by mothers across all three schools. Both sexes find themselves in factory work (of different kinds). Two mothers, both of West

Indian origin, have secured supervisory manual and routine non-manual employment; both these sectors are otherwise not populated *by mothers* across the three schools. The extent of occupational segregation by sex is thus extreme even at the broader level of sector; at the preciser level of within-sector category and specific job, segregation is virtually complete for this sample of parents. At the point of closest knowledge and experience, girls in all three schools see a sex-segregated occupational structure and labour market. I want to indicate the strength of this point, by describing the division of labour between those parents who were running a small business together, as explained by their daughters.

Kelly's (9) parents consider themselves fortunate to have secured the tenancy of a pub after a run of bad luck. They have always been involved in joint self-employment enterprises; Kelly lived on the coast until she was about seven, where her parents had run a greengrocer's shop and then a cafe. Having tired of the petty vandalism which regularly hit their seaside shopfront, they moved to London (but not to the area they now live in) seven or so years ago, where Kelly's father tried unsuccessfully to set up as a self-employed lorry driver. Financially, they were in trouble - her father was ill with depression because he wasn't making any money; her mother was keeping the family afloat with her earnings on chain store sales promotions. Kelly's parents had been interested in getting a pub before they left the coast, but had not succeeded, and once it was clear the lorry business was not going to pick up, they renewed their efforts. It took them four years, and in the end they managed it through a brewery contact - as Kelly remarked "It's not what you know, it's who you know that gets you into a pub." She was well-informed, and could describe the selection process her parents underwent in some detail. The family moved to the Wilhelma School neighbourhood to take over their first tenancy in autumn 1983. Kelly thinks her parents like it so far, but her mother especially feels it's hard work, a 14-day-a-week job. Her husband is on duty more or less all the time, and she works behind the bar and does



the food each lunchtime - she doesn't work most evenings, though. Kelly, the youngest of five children, of whom only she and her next elder brother, aged 17, still live at home, helps out too: she does the bottling up (i.e. filling the bar shelves) before coming to school in the mornings.

Kelly's parents obviously have a history of working together in partnership, but they do not split the labour in the pub equally, neither quantitatively nor qualitatively. Kelly's father is *on duty more often*; Kelly's mother *prepares the food*. There is nothing remarkable about this, and nothing automatically unfair about it on the surface - Kelly's mother certainly takes on much more of the household domestic labour, and was presumably largely responsible for the childcare when her children were small. Whether her mother has or had any *choice* about this arrangement is quite another matter; and she frequently complains to Kelly that she has too much to do all round. Kelly describes all her three elder brothers as having been "layabouts" - they never did anything to help in the house.

Kelly's case is an everyday example of how, characteristically, when women and men work together, they take on different tasks and roles and adopt different hierarchical statuses associated with these. Where parents appear to be similarly located, vertical and horizontal occupation segregation by sex is no less evident. A parallel example is offered by Denise's parents, who run their own small bakery shop. Her father is the baker; her mother works part-time out front as one of several shop assistants. Horizontally, it is Denise's father who exercises a *production skill*, and it is her mother who *helps transfer the product to the market*. Denise presented her father as quite definitely 'in charge', as did Tracy in the case of her parents, who manage a small retail outlet for a national sweetshop/newsagents chain. Vertically, it is husbands who *direct*, and it is wives who *assist*.

Returning to the patterns of the sample as a whole, I now want to reorder the information about parents' jobs into four broad, internally coherent *status levels*, as shown in Table 3.4. Level 1 includes all non-manual employment; Level 2 includes upper grade skilled manual, technical and lower grade self-employed occupations; Level 3 includes all remaining occupations; and Level 4 comprises the unemployed.

Table 3.4 : Parental employment by school and status level

| Level             | Wilhelmina |        | Dame's Trust |        | Sternrise(1) |        | Totals |        |
|-------------------|------------|--------|--------------|--------|--------------|--------|--------|--------|
|                   | Mother     | Father | Mother       | Father | Mother       | Father | Mother | Father |
| 1                 | 0          | 1      | 2            | 2      | 4            | 6      | 6      | 9      |
| 2                 | 1          | 6      | 3            | 8      | 1            | 12     | 5      | 26     |
| 3(2)              | 7+7        | 3      | 8+6          | 5      | 7+8          | 2      | 22+21  | 10     |
| 4                 | 1          | 5      | 0            | 0      | 0            | 0      | 1      | 5      |
| Totals<br>(N) (3) | 16         | 15     | 19           | 15     | 20           | 20     | 55     | 50     |

(1) A and B stream parents are combined in this instance; differences are discussed further on in the text

(2) In the mother's employment columns, the first digit refers to those in paid employment in sectors at Level 3; the second digit to full-time homemakers

(3) Totals do not correspond to 61 (N respondents) because of single-parent families and data gaps

#### Notes to Table 3.4

##### Key to sectors counted for each level :

1 Self-employed or salaried professionals and other non-manual employment : 01 03 05 10 21

2 Upper grade skilled and enterprise/self-employed lower grade employment : 13 15 17 19 20

22 23 25 27 29 33i

3 Intermediate and lower grade manual and service employment : 26 27 28 33ii 33iii 34 35 36

4 Unemployed

See the explanatory notes to Table 3.3 (above, pp.106-7) for a guide to the sectors

The distribution of parental employment is firmly clustered into manual working-class occupations, but there are differences between the schools. All girls' mothers are heavily concentrated into Level 3 jobs even when full-time homemakers are discounted. Sternrise mothers differ only in that four are teachers (so at Level 1). No Wilhelma mothers were employed full-time. What this actually means is that girls' mothers are employed as office/school cleaners, as dinnerladies, as barmaids, waitresses and canteen or cafe workers - and as the occasional shopworker or factory machinist. (10)

The majority of Wilhelma and Dame's Trust girls' fathers are employed at Levels 2 and 3. At Sternrise, the balance shifts in favour of Levels 1 and 2. Only at Wilhelma were fathers without paid work; of the five men concerned, four were long-term unemployed. (11) The kinds of jobs Wilhelma respondent fathers do are firmly and narrowly located in the manual sector: they are drivers and deliverers, warehouse and dock labourers, and they are employed in the various construction trades. Dame's Trust respondent fathers are similarly clustered into Levels 2 and 3, but none were unemployed and the jobs they had were slightly different in kind: drivers and mechanics various, cleaning and retail service contractors, or in sales and distribution trades. The impression is that Dame's Trust fathers were rather more securely placed in the labour market than were Wilhelma fathers. Level 1 for Sternrise fathers is populated by an accountant, a headteacher, an advertising/sales manager, a police officer, a community worker, and a British Rail clerical officer. The majority of Sternrise fathers are in Level 2 jobs, however: from BTel installations engineers and similar, through a plethora of closely-allied jobs in and around construction (but at various levels and including the self-employed), to the owner of a kebab shop. The 'traditional respectable working class' is less well-represented at Sternrise; rather,

fathers' occupations include considerable 'enterprise' and 'working class skilled elite' jobs, together with employment falling around the non-manual/manual divide and with a technical flavour. (12) We are looking at entrepreneurial and/or educated working-class fractions, oriented towards material affluence and upward social mobility, especially for their children.

As noted earlier, with very few exceptions, girls' mothers were all employed in similar sorts of jobs. Occupational distribution cannot open up access to mothers' significance for family social and cultural milieu as it can for fathers. It is more fruitful to look at the *relationship between* mother's and father's occupational locations. At Wilhelma, those girls' mothers who were full-time homemakers in 1984 had only ever been cleaners or factory workers in the past. Taken together with the occupational distribution of those mothers who were in paid employment (as shown in Table 3.4), this means that a combined parental occupational status rating would depress family status still further from an already low base. (13)

At Dame's Trust, the picture is slightly different: the spread of mothers' and fathers' occupations by sector is not quite so disparate as for either Wilhelma or Sternrise respondent parents. Mothers' occupational status does not so clearly further depress family status when combined with that of fathers, but neither does it raise family status in the particular sense used here. Sternrise is different yet again. The four mothers who are teachers are (or were) married to men in occupations of still higher status than their own. These families are located firmly in the achieved professional fraction of the middle class, and they would remain there were the mothers not employed. In terms of both economic and cultural capital these mothers' education and occupation 'further advantages' their daughters. The majority of Sternrise mothers are employed at Level 3, however, and their husbands have Level 2 jobs. These mothers had experienced lifetime downward occupational

mobility, in contrast to mothers from Dame's Trust or Wilhelma. After marriage and childrearing breaks, these Sternrise mothers were employed as dinnerladies, cleaners, home helps and factory workers, just as were mothers in the other schools. However, before marriage and children, several had been secretaries or shop assistants; a few had taken childminding or nursery work in the years following, when their own children were small. Only one woman, Vivienne's mother, has achieved *upward* occupational mobility over the same phase by securing a (part-time) job as a postal clerk in a solicitor's office, contrasted with former jobs as a dinnerlady and a home help. She is now in a second marriage to a community worker after divorce from a self-employed lorry driver (who went bankrupt and became an alcoholic). In general, Sternrise parents are quite likely to be in a situation where the *relative* differences between mothers' and fathers' occupational status are greater than for the parents at either Dame's Trust or Wilhelma.

38% (N = 21) of respondent mothers were at home full-time in 1984. Six of the ten mothers with a pre-school child in 1984 were at home. Equally, only nine respondent mothers were employed full-time in 1984. Again, the *contexts* in which mothers were full-time homemakers differs between schools. Only two of seven Wilhelma respondent mothers who were at home full-time had husbands in employment. At Dame's Trust, however, five of the six 1984 full-time homemaker mothers were married to men in steady employment. Lynette's father has been employed for more than twenty years at a local brewery, where he is a delivery supervisor. This counts as an office job, so 12 year old Lynette comes from a relatively well-placed family. She has two elder siblings, aged 16 and 23. She recalls that her mother once worked in a confectionery factory, but this was many years ago, before she was born, and her mother is firmly at home full-time. In this family, the wife's employment is neither absolutely necessary nor sought after. Penny's family are in a less favourable financial position; her mother's earnings are needed, even though there is plenty to

do in the house. Then 14, Penny is the eldest of four children, the youngest of whom was at nursery school in 1984. Her father is an employed painter/decorator; sometime after the first interview, her mother had returned to employment, working full-time as a factory machinist on casual piecework. In 1986 she was still, in principle, doing the same job, but earning very little because the firm had a shortage of work.

At Sternrise, six of eight 1984 full-time homemakers had husbands in secure employment - similar to the pattern at Dame's Trust. Andrea's mother had been a secretary before having children. Being a secretary is a young woman's job (see section 3.4). Several mothers who had formerly been secretaries did take the lower grade service jobs which was all the local labour market generally had to offer when they returned to employment, but for Andrea's mother this was neither necessary nor desirable. She has two children, a son aged 17 in 1984 (who had already left school), and Andrea herself, then in her third year at Sternrise. She had worked part-time as a nursery assistant when her children were smaller, but had given it up some years ago. The pay was low and she neither particularly wanted nor needed a job. Her husband, a BTel installations engineer, earned good wages. In spring 1986, as Andrea reached her sixteenth birthday, her mother was still at home full-time and had no desire or intention to seek employment.

### 3.3.2 *Discussion*

For the overwhelming majority of the girls in this sample, regardless of the school they attend, their closest examples of adult women's employment patterns (i.e., their mothers, and their peers' mothers) are highly conventional in nature. Employment will have been interrupted for childrearing, and the return to (usually part-time) employment will have meant doing the same kind of lower grade service (or manu-

facturing) sector jobs as years before, or it will have meant downward mobility into such jobs. The actual occupations women are ever employed in fall across a narrow, stereotyped range; they are not generally well-paid. The quantity and quality of their labour force participation is circumscribed by their gender and by their responsibility for domestic and childcare labour. At the same time, this broad canvas is made up of a fine network of subsidiary and underlying patterns for girls coming from subtly varying social and educational locations.

We might here reflect on the consensus of opinion in and around Wilhelma School. *Parents, pupils of both sexes and their teachers largely share the conviction that in the current climate, girls are in a more advantageous position than are boys in the transition from school to work and on the adult labour market.* In the first place, parental occupational segregation by sex is virtually complete. It is not the case that segregation is less sharp for the respondent parent population at the school with the highest average level social origins, i.e. at Sternrise. In the case of parents employed in joint enterprises, horizontal and vertical segregation between spouses is maintained, just as in the case of Amy's parents: it is her father who is the headteacher and her mother who is the classroom primary teacher. In fact, if we relate the spread of women's employment by occupational sector to the range of sectors represented altogether by the parents, it is precisely *at Sternrise* that women's concentration into a small range of occupational sectors becomes *relatively most evident*. (14) In other words, for this sample, as the school's parent population becomes less 'disadvantaged', women's specific disadvantage shows up all the more clearly. Where men's labour market position is severely depressed, women's disadvantage becomes relatively less clear.

The key concept is once more one of *structured relations*, not absolute structures nor unstructured processes. It is the effects of particularly structured relations which account for the widespread belief, especially prominent at Wilhelma but also found

elsewhere, that in the current economic and labour market climate it is men and boys who suffer more. In purely relative terms, this view is quite correct : the more depressed the local economy, and the more it is juxtaposed to a stratified but thriving metropolitan labour market (as is the case for this study) the more 'accurate' it becomes. At the same time, such a view ensures that the already existing and persistently continuing *absolutely* depressed situation of women and girls in general is lost from sight. *Relative* differences *between* women and girls from different backgrounds and communities exist too. They show up even in the numerically small sample under consideration here. The similarities between the labour market positions of these girls' mothers are nevertheless striking, however familiar with women's restricted occupational distribution we have grown from the research literature. Former factory girls become dinnerladies, cleaners and home helps - but so do former secretaries.

In the views held by many parents and teachers about labour market chances by sex, it seems self-evident that girls and women are better-off. There is a competitive market for junior office staff and for shop assistants of all kinds in the Greater London area. There is always a demand for school and hospital auxiliary staff, for social welfare care assistants, for barmaids, waitresses and cleaners. Factory work is relatively well-paid, for women, if you can get it, though it is often insecure and paid on piecework. In the East and South-East of London, rag trade and food processing factories are traditionally large employers of female labour. A good part of this operates on the grey economy, more traditionally in the rag trade sweatshops, but increasingly so in a new, expanding branch of food processing : the preparation of fresh foods for the busy professional and executive market, those who are too busy to eat at home or to prepare food from scratch when they do find their way there. They require high quality produce for consumption up in London or to take home to the 'fridge and the microwave. A good number of this clientele are women,



women who will never have attended schools like Dame's Trust and Wilhelma, but who in future may have been to schools like Sternrise and perhaps have found a way through to further and higher education. Certainly one girl's sister had found such a job in the mid-eighties, preparing fresh fruit salads. Another girl had herself decided that there is, yet again, a future in quality foods and restaurants. So Vivienne was going to train as a chef, "not a cook!", and work in a 'posh' hotel up town, like her boyfriend's mother, who is a silver service waitress and is "in on all the big functions", as she described excitedly when I saw her for the last time in 1986, in the spring of her fifth year at Sternrise. Vivienne had been a Sternrise A-stream girl.

### *3.4 Siblings: occupations and school-work transitions*

What might the girls in this study have been learning about the *youth* labour market and transitions to adult working life from the experiences of older siblings? Were older siblings reproducing their parents' gendered and classed social locations?

12 of the younger girls and 20 of the older girls had elder siblings aged at least 16 in 1984 or 1985. Each elder sibling is treated here as an 'instance'. (15) 49 elder siblings were aged between 16 and 21 in 1984: 26 sisters and 23 brothers, in both cases drawn from (only partially overlapping) 20 respondent cases. 14 elder siblings were aged 22 or over in 1984: 6 sisters for 4 respondent cases, and 8 brothers for 6 respondent cases. In total, then, there are 32 elder sisters and 31 elder brothers in the sibling group.

### 3.4.1 *Education and training beyond 16*

Of the total 63 siblings, only *seven* had continued or were in full-time education beyond 16 over the period of study or earlier. Five of these siblings' younger sisters, i.e. our respondents, were at Dame's Trust. Three of these came from West Indian British families. Justine's elder sister, for example, had stayed on into the sixth form and had passed her A levels for university entrance; she went to Italy for a year and in autumn 1986 went up to Manchester to read biology.

But families approach and use further/higher education differently according to the specific milieu in which they are embedded. Kelly from Wilhelma, whose parents are publicans (see pp.108-9), has three elder brothers. The middle brother, aged 24 in 1984, also went to Wilhelma School, but Kelly reports that even at fourteen years of age it was obvious that he was a "genius" at drawing. He went off to art college and is now a successful commercial artist working in central London. Kelly was proud of her brother, but she saw him as an inexplicable exception. Her other two brothers are both toolmakers (one still an apprentice). Kelly's family, who have only recently moved to the Wilhelma locality, are not typical members of the community as represented by the respondents' parent group at the school; they have a history of small joint enterprise and geographical mobility; and their sons have all found their way into qualified occupations.

Toolmaking is an apprenticeship trade, which raises the question of post-16 vocational training as opposed to formal education. Six elder brothers (and no sisters) had passed through or gained access to an apprenticeship by 1986. Apart from Kelly's brothers, two had got into BTel as installations engineers, amongst them Andrea's elder brother. With the assistance of his father, himself an installations engineer, he had, in spring 1986, just succeeded in getting into BTel, after three years unsuccessful

fully spent trying to get a skilled apprenticeship of some kind. In Andrea's family, the security of employment with a large organisation is valued, and the way *for boys* to achieve this lies through the traditional qualification route of apprenticeship. Her brother was fortunate to have the reserve card of his father to 'put in a good word' for him with the selection panel. Sally's brother, just coming up to 16 in 1984, was expecting to take advantage of similar connections by starting a plumbing apprenticeship at his uncle's small business. Vivienne's brother had also wanted to find an engineering apprenticeship, but was still out of work a year after leaving school in 1983. He then took a YTS placement at a local bus garage. He'd been promised an apprenticeship if he passed his college exams, which he duly did in 1985, but the promised transfer didn't materialise. After his YTS ended he found a temporary job delivering furniture, but in spring 1986 he was once more unemployed. His stepfather is a community worker and so was not in a position to help him.

In sum, only for 19 (30% of) elder siblings was there any evidence or likelihood of post-16 education or training. Twelve of these were brothers, accounted for by the exclusively male apprenticeships. We could further assume that a few more sisters who were well into regular office employment, or had entered childrearing breaks, had probably done some form of part-time or employer-provided post-16 vocational training. Overall, though, siblings' experiences of post-compulsory education and training had been, and were continuing to be, rather meagre.

There was no hint of any sister (or brother) moving beyond gender-appropriate education or training fields. (Even Justine's undergraduate sister had chosen to take her degree in biology, the classically 'feminine' science.) For only a very small number of girls was there some direct source of sibling knowledge about further / higher education, and only the four respondents from middle-class professional families at Sternrise could draw on their parents in this respect instead. Most of the

girls in this study had no apparent source of female knowledge or role models about apprenticeships trades (or their YTS replacements), even had they considered these. The girls *did* know that transitions between school and work were hazardous; there were enough examples amongst their elder siblings to tell them this, even if they had not otherwise heard about it. Older brothers were also much more likely to be or have been unemployed on leaving school, and the male-typed jobs they wanted were more difficult to secure. Older sisters had been more successful in finding and keeping jobs, but all of these jobs were highly female-typed.

### 3.4.2 Siblings' jobs

Overall, older brothers and sisters were spread over 17 Hope-Goldthorpe occupational sectors. The young unemployed in this group were mainly Wilhelma girls' brothers and brothers of ethnic minority girls. The five siblings employed in the very

Table 3.5 : The distribution of parent and sibling employment and occupation by sector and status level

| Level       | All mothers | Elder sisters | All fathers | Elder brothers |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1           | 11          | 31            | 18          | 10             |
| 2           | 9           | 0             | 52          | 42             |
| 3(1)        | 39+38       | 38+9          | 20          | 13             |
| residual(2) | 0           | 9             | 0           | 2              |
| 4           | 3           | 6.5           | 10          | 23             |
| 5(3)        | 0           | 6.5           | 0           | 10             |

|              |          |          |          |          |
|--------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Totals % [N] | 100 [55] | 100 [32] | 100 [50] | 100 [31] |
|--------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|

- (1) In the mothers' and sisters' employment columns, the first digit refers to those in paid employment in sectors at level 3; the second digit to full-time homemakers  
 (2) In this category employment details are too few to allow reliable sector allocation  
 (3) Those in full-time post-compulsory education/training are allocated to a separate Level 5

Notes to Table 3.5

Sectors at each status level

1 Self-employed or salaried professionals and other non-manual employment

(a) 01 03 05 10 (b) 21 (c) 08 09 14

2 Upper grade skilled and enterprise/self-employed lower grade employment

(a) 17 19 20 25 33i (b) 13 15 22 23 27 29 (c) 18 30

3 Intermediate and lower grade manual and service employment

(a) 27 33ii 33iii (b) 26 28 34 35 36 (c) 32

4 Unemployed

See the explanatory notes to Table 3.3 (pp.106-7) for a guide to the sectors

The sector subcategories under each level mean:

(a) sector represented only by parents

(b) sector represented by both parents and siblings

(c) sector represented only by siblings, which are (with examples of occupational titles):

08 Industrial and business managers/small enterprises (small bank branch manager, general manager of small building firm, small company area manager, etc.)

09 Self-employed professionals/lower grade (clergy, writers, actors, freelance designers, commercial artists, etc.)

14 Managers in services and small administrative units (managers of shops and service agencies (e.g. travel agency, garage showroom, small commercial firm, betting shop, food/clothes shops))

18 Skilled manual workers in manufacturing/higher grade (welders, toolmakers, carpet fitters, etc.)

30 Skilled manual workers in manufacturing/lower grade (brewery vatmen, blast furnacemen, glaziers, etc.)

32 Semi-skilled manual workers in construction & extraction (sewage workers, bricklayer's labourer, road-mender, construction worker nec, etc.)

lowest status occupations came from three Wilhelma families. Table 3.5 (on the preceding page) compares parents' and siblings' employment by sector and status level. These data thus summarise emerging patterns of gender and class reproduction in terms of occupational status for the community groups.

The data in Table 3.5 show that a third (N =11) of elder sisters had Level 1 jobs, but these are all in sector 21, i.e. they are secretaries, routine level office workers and bank cashiers. Mothers are *not* to be found in these jobs. No older sisters had Level 2 jobs. Those few mothers at Level 2 are those who have reached skilled/supervisory

positions in service/ manufacturing, or who are in some form of self-employment with kin. But almost two-fifths of both mothers and elder sisters were employed in Level 3 occupations, in other words, in lower grade service and semi-/unskilled jobs in factories or distribution. (Few sisters were then full-time homemakers.)

But will those sisters who have found sector 21 jobs be able to regain these after a childrearing break, which the vast majority will continue to take given the scarcity and expense of good quality childcare? Their mothers' experiences suggest they will not (Martin and Roberts' (1984, Ch.10) national data agree). The divergencies between the adult and youth male labour markets are of a different nature than those between the adult and youth female labour markets. Young women are 'more favourably' placed than adult women of their mothers' age only because of the sector 21 jobs they can readily find; later, they lose this (ultimately dubious) advantage. Young men are *temporarily* less well-placed than adult men of their fathers' age; later, they close the gap.

Older brothers are distributed similarly to fathers, except that the rank ordering between Levels 1-4 differs, both because of the level of youth male unemployment and due to age-linked occupational placement. On the working class labour market there are young men's and adult men's jobs. So, for example, elder brothers were not supervisors of manual workers (just as elder sisters are not). Neither were elder brothers lorry drivers, though there are examples of taking on van/delivery or minicab driving as temporary fill-ins whilst looking for something better. For 'proper' lorry driving they need a HGV licence; they need experience; and they may need capital, since self-employment with your own vehicle is common. Other probably temporary locations are a range of skilled/semi-skilled jobs lying in the interstices between manufacturing and construction: double-glazing installers, roof repairers and so on. There is a huge market in Greater London for these home

improvement related services, staffed by a largely casualised young male workforce. Otherwise, elder brothers were found in a familiar set of jobs : gas board and BTel technicians/engineers, toolmakers, painters/decorators with the council, building labourers, on market stalls and in the Army.

There is, again, virtually no overlap between the occupational sectors of elder sisters and brothers, and certainly not of actual occupations themselves. Occupational segregation by sex is therefore equally as marked for siblings as for parents. The sex differences in the distribution of siblings' employment by both sector and across levels mirror those between mothers and fathers.

### 3.4.3 Discussion

The information on siblings' transitions to, and positions in, the labour market could be summarised as follows. Young women do secure employment when they leave school, either 'good' jobs at Level 1 or simply 'jobs' at Level 3. Although the jobs they do are 'women's jobs', this is not of great consequence. They *do get* jobs, and the service sector has a future. When young men do not gain a foothold into secure and skilled manual employment (and therefore cannot look forward to a 'respectable working-class male career'), they are very likely to become unemployed and they have few alternative routes to pursue.

This summary ignores the question of the *kinds* of jobs most young women actually have. Their future prospects are not secured by having gained access to employment of an apparently attractive kind on leaving school. Equally, this perspective neglects the question of why it is that young men do not consider alternative routes given the contraction in traditional working-class male employment. These alternative routes generally mean the kinds of jobs young *women* pursue and take. Young

men do not consider these either before leaving school or after experiencing difficulties on the labour market because they know such jobs offer poor pay levels which are unlikely to improve significantly with age and seniority; and of course because they are female-typed jobs. The girls were strongly inclined to agree with many teachers' views that it is boys whose room for manoeuvre is more highly-constrained, for example, if they are interested in 'girls' subjects or 'women's' jobs. But whatever is the real situation at school, certainly girls are worse off on the labour market. The constraints placed around young men may not relax, but the constraints placed around young women tighten.

Over the last decade, the expansion of the service sector (food provision, personal/household services) and the shift in retail organisation and technology has brought a part-time and casual employment boom in the London metropolitan region. These jobs are staffed by women, but also especially by young people, including those still at school. The extent of (illegal) employment of schoolchildren aged 13+ in local retail and service small business outlets is of an order that after-school/weekend jobs are ubiquitous and regarded as normal amongst the Wilhelma and Dame's Trust respondents from sometime during their second year of secondary schooling. Effectively, such employment is the channel of transition from school to the (youth) labour market. Many such pupils leave school at Easter or at the beginning of exam leave in their fifth year to work full-time at the place they have been employed at part-time. It is in *these* transition jobs that young people get their 'careers education and vocational guidance', *here* that they learn what employment means. This is not to say that they intend to stay in such jobs permanently, though some do see them as 'normal' destinations; and it is girls rather than boys who are likely to *remain* there. In many ways, YTS is simply an assurance of greater availability of precisely the kinds of fill-in jobs young people from such communities and local economies have always had. The older girl respondents in this study were almost universally and



vehemently opposed to what they knew or had heard from family and schoolfriends to be 'slave labour' : those on YTS were doing the kind of work schoolleavers had always done, but were being paid much less than in the past (see here Brown and Ashton, 1987; Cockburn, 1987; Pollard et al., 1989; Raffe, 1988).

The data give little reason to suppose that our respondents, the girls themselves, will not reproduce the gendered and classed locations of their parents and siblings. The *processes* by which they arrive in those locations and the *internal social and cultural differentiations* which mark actual trajectories and destinations are not of a piece, as we shall see in the next chapter.

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#### Footnotes

1 These accounts were written using generally available information and from fieldnotes, which were written immediately following each visit to a school. They document interactions with staff and pupils and describe incidents observed en passant. Their primary purpose was to record the life-history of the curriculum action element of the GAOC project (cf. GAOC Project Team, 1987), and as such they provide a rich source of input for the school descriptions included here.

2 See Jones (1986) for an empirical investigation of youth in the social structure which traces social stratification and mobility patterns over the years of transition from school to the labour market. The patterns are shown to be quite complex. In the early years considerable downward mobility (in relation to parental social class) and general movement occurs, but gradually the patterns move towards reproduction of class and gender labour market positions. In other words, young people are subject to a specifically *youth* labour market which places them in relatively unfavourable sectors/levels and which displays considerable turbulence. This openness and instability overlies, however, deeper processes which systematically sort young people onto the adult labour market by class origin and gender.

3 Within the larger GAOC project research design, this 'research only' school was foreseen as a Hawthorne-type control - would a research project into gender and occupational choice processes of itself engender processes of reflection and change amongst teachers and pupils? In fact, the marked differences between the schools as social and educational environments confound such comparisons, at least between schools, if not necessarily between forms in the same school. Unsurprisingly, it is rather the different ways in which the schools integrated the GAOC project into their own larger policies and practices on equal opportunities which determined the pupils' perceptions of and responses to the research and the curriculum action (cf. Chisholm & Holland, 1987).

4 Branch officers were here endeavouring to be positively helpful to researchers, given their extensive background knowledge of ILEA schools and their legitimate concern that schools with more than their share of problems should not be additionally loaded with what could be (and was, in some quarters) viewed as a politically sensitive project. The kind of factor which placed a school into the exclusion group was, for example,

whether there had been a very recent change of Head; but other, more 'serious' difficulties were taken into account.

5 Appendix III reproduces the semi-structured interview schedules and includes a discussion of the data collection process and context.

6 The allocation process is explained in Chapter 4. Essentially, eight initial groupings became eleven gender locations, of which nine are empirically present in the follow-through sample.

7 The information about parents' employment has been classified using the Hope-Goldthorpe scale (Goldthorpe and Hope, 1974). This scale was developed specifically for the Nuffield social mobility study (Goldthorpe et al., 1980; Halsey et al., 1980) to improve upon those used in other and earlier investigations (cf. Reid, 1981, Ch.2 for a summary of these). Essentially, the scale divides occupations (in their employment context) into seven 'social classes', but within this it offers a detailed structuring of occupational sectors and groupings. The scale has disadvantages for studies like this one, where the focus is upon gender relations and the respondents are children/young people rather than adults. Nevertheless, in practice it remains the most recent scale of its kind, and it is the one most widely-used by researchers. The scale orders occupations into 36 sectors containing a variable number of occupational groups, each of which comprises a list of occupational titles. The sectors are differentiated along several criteria : some divide by skill/qualification levels; others, for the self-employed, according to the size of business owned and the number of employees as well as the kind of service provided or goods produced; yet others on the basis of general social prestige or employment security and job conditions; and some have to do with the nature of the work itself. It is unlikely that other than large national samples would produce a spread across the whole scale. The sectors can be ordered into status groups at different levels of refinement, but of course the natures of particular samples, in so far as they do not represent a cross-section of the national population, lead in practice to different patterns of cluster by sector and status level. In the case of this study's sample, numbers are also small : the parents of 61 girls. The analysis which follows therefore concentrates upon the occupational sector clustering patterns by school and by parental sex; and it orders the status levels represented within those patterns into a hierarchy *relevant to the internal nature and size of the available sample*. Parents' specific occupations are readily inserted at appropriate points in the discussion, since their range is on the whole narrow - especially so for mothers. All the tables in this chapter use 1984 data, i.e. from the first/only interview. As the information was supplied by the girls themselves, it may not be wholly accurate, but short of visiting parents themselves this was the most reliable and up-to-date source of information. For the follow-through sample there is, of course, a three-year sequence of information about parental employment. In no case did 1984 data have to be revised in the light of 1985 or 1986 response.

8 To counter some of the difficulties in addressing the Hope-Goldthorpe scale, which was developed on and for males, to women workers, some additions and modifications to the within-sector categories were made. Martin & Roberts (1984, see especially Ch.3) encountered similar problems in using the OPCS Classification of Occupations for their survey of women's employment. They modified the scale by subdividing the categories into which a large proportion of women's jobs fall, in order to permit a finer discrimination between these. As they write : "The OPCS Classification System was originally devised at a time when the large majority of employees were men working in manufacturing industries. Though there have been revisions, the level of discrimination between jobs in the service sector (where many women's jobs are located) in no way matches the fine distinctions originally drawn for the manufacturing sector. The resulting distributions of women's occupations...showed that the majority of women's jobs fall into a small number of categories. It may, of course, be argued that women are not in fact to be found in as great a variety of occupations as men....Alternatively, the

schema may rightly be criticised for failing to discriminate adequately between the jobs that women do in terms of both the level and range of skill the jobs cover" (ibid., p.20). Both points are valid, of course. In the case of this study, the small size of the sample and the absolutely narrow range of actual jobs in which the mothers (and elder sisters) were found made such extensive modification impracticable and unnecessary. However, for a number of occupations and for housewife, a rating task was conducted with groups of pupils at the schools in order to place these items within the scale as the children themselves thought appropriate. They were asked to sort lists of jobs, which included both occupations on the scale and those which were not included but occupied a space in their perceptions of occupational structure. For the purposes of this analysis, it is relevant that housewife and mother were placed into sector 34. Full-time homemakers amongst respondents' parents are therefore included (and noted) at this level in subsequent tables.

9 All girls' names have been changed. Appendix II gives a list of case numbers and aliases for general reference. Kelly is case 3/2. The first digit refers to a girl's age in 1984, i.e. 1 = 11/12, first former; 3 = 13/14, third former. The second/third digits are numbered consecutively by school. Cases 1/1-1/9 and 3/1-3/9 are Wilhelma girls; cases 1/10-1/19 and 3/1-3/19 are Dame's Trust girls; cases 1/20-1/31 and 3/20-3/30 are Sternrise girls.

10 The question of shifts in employment status and occupation between 1984-6 as revealed by the follow-through respondents' parents can be readily summarised. The extent of shift for fathers was small (13% of 37 cases) and its nature was unremarkable given the trades and labour markets in which they are largely located: they moved in/out of employment, and in/out of self-employment. About 40% of mothers shifted, but three-quarters of this was movement back into employment after periods out of the labour market - into the kinds of jobs most of the 1984 employed mothers had.

11 Their daughters could not ever remember their fathers having had a job. In all the families, mothers were full-time homemakers and their daughters could not recall them having had paid employment for a long time either. That these mothers do not take paid employment is a rational decision, given social security regulations and the kinds of jobs available to them. In the community served by Wilhelma School, numbers of girls (and boys) were thus growing up in the mid-eighties with a highly attenuated relation to the labour market.

12 The Level 2 jobs in which Sternrise fathers were actually employed are: a foreman carpenter (who moved to self-employment after 1984); a self-employed plasterer; a self-employed builder and decorator; a local council employed plumber's mate; an estates company oddjobman; two printers (one of whom became a Wapping casualty during 1985); a BTel installations engineer; a gas board fitter; a train driver; a bus driver; a chauffeur (once a reporter); a BR clerical officer (originally in the Army); and a kebab shopowner.

13 Unless we take the view that the mere *fact* of women's employment raises family status, but this seems unrealistic. Women do feel better about themselves when earning their own money; some may look down on full-time housewives, and the phrase 'just a housewife' is an everyday evaluation of self and others. But these are all quite *distinct* issues. Whether the families where mothers were employed were economically better-off than in those where mothers were at home full-time is a more complex question. Those families where fathers were unemployed (and mothers at home) were *prima facie* very badly off. Given the general nature of this sample, we can assume that in the overwhelming majority of cases mothers' employment was absolutely financially necessary. In this sense, such families were better-off than they would have been had mothers not taken paid jobs; but this did not make them comfortably off.

14 The ratio of sector spread between mothers: fathers by school is as follows: Wilhelma 6:12, Dame's Trust 9:15, Sternrise 6:19.

15 This leaves at least one year within the remit of the three-year study to see what they undertook at 16+. Only for the follow-through sample do we have information beyond 1984. For 8 of the younger girls and 11 of the older girls follow-up sibling information is available. This section uses (a) the 1984-only information on *current* elder sibling occupation, and (b) the 1986 information as the *last entry* for the elder siblings of follow-through respondents. The effect of the latter is to mask any participation in YTS and interim periods of unemployment for those follow-through elder siblings who were in their early post-education years between 1984-6. Since each elder sibling is treated as an 'instance', larger families also appear disproportionately in the sibling group. This has the effect of increasing the representation of ethnic minorities in the sibling group. One-sixth (N=10) of the respondent sample is of ethnic minority origin; but 29% of elder brothers and 41% of elder sisters fall into this category. Additionally, between-school differences in average family size and respondent sibling position mean that elder siblings are drawn disproportionately from Wilhelma girls of both age groups and from the older girls at Sternrise.

#### **4 The modalities of gender relations : an empirical exploration**

The analysis of social and educational contexts in the preceding chapter suggests that most girls in this study are likely to reproduce the gender and class locations of their parents, given the sharp divisions in mothers' and fathers' employment/occupations and the unfolding destinations of their older sisters and brothers. The girls will not necessarily reproduce exactly the same ways of life, given the changing economic and social circumstances of their communities, but they are likely to reproduce equivalent socio-economic locations. (1)

In this study, I am more interested to describe and begin to understand the differentiated processes by which the reproduction of gender relations takes place. In so doing, we gain insight into how some girls might be able, at least in some measure, to shift the terms of gender relations in their own lives. The framing circumstances from which they have to negotiate gendered transitions vary considerably. The task of this chapter is, then, to describe those circumstances and negotiations more precisely than is possible through the kind of 'social origins and destinations' data used in the previous chapter to 'place' the sample. In other words, we shall map gender locations by providing accounts of specialised gender habitus. This chapter therefore describes and reflects on the modalities of gender relations as these are realised in girls' lives and perspectives.

The first section of the chapter explains how the interview data were analysed in order to yield these accounts. Reports of research using qualitative methods of data collection and analysis have come to favour a style in which textual description and interpretation are interspersed with illustrative quotations from individual respondents. Some parts of the chapters to come follow this pattern, but essentially I have chosen a slightly different route through analysis and presentation. I wanted to

conduct a spatial mapping analysis, but without losing the holistic quality of the data. As a result, the data are presented in a dual form : pattern types and case studies. In this sense, they are analogous to the distinction Bourdieu (1980) makes between 'class habitus' and 'individual habitus.' Class habitus is an analytic construction which unites 'that which one might expect to find' : a 'type' that is never fully found in an empirical instance. The gender location summary definitions (in Chapter 2, pp.77-80) are, then, shorthand descriptions of types. Individual habitus is a structural variation of a class habitus, which manifests the unique instance, an exemplar, within the class and its social biography. The case studies in this chapter are, then, exemplars.

In this chapter, the case studies (in section 4.2) are placed before the gender location pattern types (in section 4.3). The case studies themselves are immediately followed by a brief discussion of some of the intersections between gender, ethnicity and class which arise in the data. The chapter concludes (section 4.4) by reflecting upon the ways in which girls understand gender divisions in relation to personal and social change.

#### *4.1 The analysis of the interview data*

I have already described the sample itself in the preceding chapter (section 3.1). The analysis in this chapter makes use of data both from the follow-through sample and from those girls who were interviewed once only in 1984. The analysis therefore used data from single interviews and from sequences of three interviews with the same girl. The case studies (in section 4.2), however, are compiled from information in the first/only (i.e. 1984) interview with a respondent. In other words, they do not take social biographical processes into account (this is dealt with in Chapter 6).

The method of analysis involves a successive distillation of individual responses to produce 'pattern types'. These patterns are of a qualitatively different order than the empirical cases which were their origin. In this sense these patterns are ideal types produced through a version of the constant comparative method. The pattern types are multi-faceted, in that the elements which make them up allow the gender location which they represent to be viewed from different perspectives. These perspectives include social origin, cultural resources, understandings and realisations.

Analysis began with the allocation of each of the 61 girls interviewed in 1984 into intuitively derived categories. The allocations were grounded in aggregate response over the whole interview. In other words, the initial classification of the 1984 interviews was of an emergent nature. This intuitive classification was hazardous, but was necessary in order to select a smaller number of girls to be followed through over the next two years. It would not have been possible, within the resources available, to have followed through all 61 girls. Theoretical sampling (rather than simply reducing numbers on a random basis) offers a greater 'return on investment' in this kind of research. Neither was there sufficient time before the second round of interviews to construct and systematically carry through the kind of analysis procedure which is described below. In effect, this chapter is an attempt to make the intuitive classification explicit by providing the criteria which allocate girls to gender locations. It does so by giving empirical exemplars of the gender locations, and by describing the features of these locations in a more generalised form.

The first step in the analysis ordered the information in the interviews into 'thematic categories.' These categories needed to be relevant to the focus of the study, i.e. the processes of social and cultural reproduction of gender relations. They also had to be able to point up the differences (rather than the similarities) between responses.

This analysis of differences would offer the coordinates on the gender locations map. From the intuitive classification of gender locations, I therefore selected those which seemed most sharply different from each other. On this basis, the preconsciousness, marginality, struggle and cultural apprenticeship categories became the 'poles' for initial analysis.

Full transcriptions of taped interviews, all conducted by the same interviewer, were prepared for eight cases: two from each of the four 'polar' locations (one older girl, one younger girl). After close scrutiny of the content and style of response in each case, the interview transcripts were 'rewritten' as continuous narratives, which contained the essence of the information in the interview. These narratives were then each divided into sub-sections or 'thematic episodes.' These episodes consisted of a set of statements which focussed on what I took to be the critical features of the cultural reproduction of gender relations. The eleven elements of each episode are:

- community embeddedness and social networks
- family employment and occupation
- significant others/aspirations
- significant others/role models
- advice and information resources
- labour market picture
- main felt constraints
- gendered division of labour in production and reproduction
- occupational aspiration history
- current aspirations and expectations
- orientation to education

A twelfth topic, 'awareness and consciousness of gender/other forms of social divisions', was added in as a summative element. It drew together information from across the whole interview, including non-verbal response, to provide a basis for an overall evaluation of each case on my part.



It was then possible to group these elements into broader thematic categories. Allocation to a gender location then depends on variations in the empirical realisation of the elements which make up each of these categories. The elements thus function as semantic markers for the category to which they belong. The 'key' semantic marker is the division of labour by sex, which discriminates between all gender locations analysed here. The structure for analysing the interview data was now in place, as shown below.

| Thematic categories                                                                                                                  | Semantic markers                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| social origins and locations                                                                                                         | community embeddedness and social networks                                                                                                                                                     |
| resources and role models                                                                                                            | family employment and occupation<br>significant others/aspirations<br>significant others/role models<br>advice and information resources                                                       |
| understandings<br>of the social world                                                                                                | labour market picture<br>main felt constraints<br>• gendered division of labour in production and reproduction<br>•• awareness and consciousness of gender/<br>other forms of social divisions |
| educational-occupational<br>realisations                                                                                             | occupational aspiration history<br>current aspirations and expectations<br>orientation to education                                                                                            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• basic differentiating principle in gender discourse</li> <li>•• summative marker</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                |

These twelve semantic markers, which had been constructed from the initial eight transcripts as described above, were now applied to the whole sample. This yielded the distribution of the girls across the range of gender locations which were required for the main empirical analysis. The defining features of the semantic markers were used to bring together relevant statements from the interview so that these formed

what was earlier termed an 'episode.' This set of statements were themselves written onto a card in the form of a paraphrase and, where appropriate, defining quotations. In practice, this meant that each interview was 'processed' into twelve episode cards, two examples of which are reproduced here, both from the same case and year:

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**Current aspirations/expectations**

3/11/1984

Patrice wants and expects to follow in the family traditions and join the rag trade as a self-employed designer-dressmaker. She says she has always wanted to do this (except for a brief flirtation with becoming a beautician). Her father was very firm that he wanted and expected Patrice to go into the rag trade along the lines of her cousin, and she appears to have readily acceded to his wishes. She sees her future positively, in terms of entering a family trade embedded in a distinctive local culture and economy.

Ideally she would like her cousin to take her on when she leaves school; if this is not possible, she will probably start off employed in a clothing production factory, firstly perhaps on pressing and later graduating to be a machinist. This would be a training period, where she would learn the skills of dressmaking and (if working for her cousin) running a small business. Her ultimate goal is to have her own business, like her cousin.

If she doesn't make it as a dressmaker, she thinks she'd "just" be working in a clothes shop or a cosmetic department. She says she "wouldn't mind it", but the tone of her voice suggests she would not be enthusiastic about the idea.

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**Labour market picture**

3/11/1984

Patrice describes the local labour market well : loads of shops and taxis. The neighbourhood is distinctive for that in her view, i.e. self-employed small businesspeople and tradespeople. But it is not worse off in actual opportunity terms than other areas are. The one exception to this is the City, where people with qualifications go to work as secretaries in office blocks or in banks. The way she speaks of the City suggests it has an aura of status and of glamour she finds attractive. She would like to work up there - but she does see it as another world, separate from her own community and culture. And she has never wanted to be a secretary anyway. She prefers, in the end, to be her own boss and she values the traditional economic culture of the East End:

"...shops, there's a lot of shops, and a lot of taxi-drivers - they're all the sort of set jobs, that are, sort of, standard to us....the City has got the thing of offices and {special tone} banks and all the rest of it. And we've got little shops....[But] no, I've never fancied it, behind a - bank, you know, when you've got your own business you can do what you like with it."

Q: It's quite a well-established tradition round here, isn't it, that people have their own businesses?

{eagerly} "Yes, little businesses and little shops, little family shops and that."

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Each girl had been intuitively allocated to (what became) the gender locations on the basis of the 1984 interview. The next step, once twelve episode cards had been prepared for each girl and each interview, was to group the sets of (in the first instance) 1984 cards together for all those girls who had initially been allocated to the same location. The task now became one of recording both consistencies and divergencies across cases for each semantic marker. This was a complex exercise, requiring judgements of relative significance and balance between individual cases, informational adequacy, and the intuitive classification itself. The method is nevertheless a systematically-grounded one, readily open to a reliability check by asking coders to sort episode cards to semantic markers. This reliability test was not conducted for the present study, however. The sorting task requires 'sophisticated' coders, i.e. those with a complex knowledge of the theoretical approach taken here. At minimum, they would need to have access to the information contained in Chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis. Ipso facto, this information was not at hand at the point it would have been needed. We are pointing here, then, to the possibility for conducting reliability checks for future datasets analysed in a similar way. Additionally, of course, this study is oriented towards theory building and understanding rather than towards theory testing and prediction. This does not obviate a concern for reliability and validity, but technically and theoretically adequate solutions are rarely readily found in sociological investigation of the former kind.

Once the distribution of cases across gender locations had been checked in the way described earlier, the next step was to construct a final definition for each gender location. This meant returning once more to all twelve episode cards for each girl allocated to a given location. (Appendix VII gives an exemplar set of episode cards to show the kind of data with which the analysis worked.) At this final stage of the analysis, the task became one of abstracting common features for the group of girls in question. There are, then, twelve defining attributes for each gender location, which are the basis of the description of 'pattern types' (in section 4.3). (2) It is, of course, these attributes which supplied the summary definitions of the gender locations (in Chapter 2).

The empirical data which follows in this chapter and in Chapter 6 is drawn from the following gender locations : preconsciousness, fatalism, avoidance, struggle, marginality, codebending, and cultural apprenticeship. Three conceptualised gender locations (instrumentality, neoconventionality and family enterprise) could not be adequately empirically explored in this study. The data necessary to define the first two of these cannot be obtained from schoolchildren : they are both accommodations which are realised by occupational and domestic placement. However, these gender locations could be explored more adequately with an older sample. Similarly, the data necessary to define family enterprise was not available in this sample. Essentially, family enterprise is a gender location expected to arise for established entrepreneurial middle class fractions (who are not likely to send their daughters to inner-city ILEA comprehensives).

#### 4.2 *Gender locations : case studies*

This section gives case studies for each of the seven gender locations included in the empirical analysis. Four locations (preconsciousness, struggle, marginality and codebending) are each represented by two case studies, in which one is always drawn from the ethnic minority girls in the sample. This facilitates the discussion which follows the case studies (section 4.2.5). Three locations (fatalism, avoidance and cultural apprenticeship) are represented by one case study each (all 'indigenous' girls).

Case studies can be regarded as portraits in which the sitter shares in the production of the image. They give the gender locations a living, experiential quality. However, the gender locations are not presented as discrete entities. Rather, the case studies which exemplify them are ordered into a conceptual sequence. The model of gender locations in Chapter 2 arranges the locations into positions, transitions and resolutions. Here, the non-transforming positions are preconsciousness and fatalism, the potentially transforming positions are marginality and codebending, the transitional locations are avoidance and struggle, and the non-transforming resolution is cultural apprenticeship. The case studies are grouped and presented in this order.

The differentiating features which shape these portraits are most readily summarised by comparing these four major types of gender locations. In non-transforming positions, marked social/educational disadvantage, together with what might tentatively be described as age-stage related social or cognitive 'immaturity', are characteristic in comparison with all other sectors. Potentially transforming positions are especially recognisable through an engaged but (partially) autonomous relation to education. Transitional locations are marked by a varyingly realised engagement with tensions between major forms of structured inequalities and

between individual possibilities and constraints in social or educational contexts. Non-transforming resolutions must all, in principle, be recognisable through an active, reflexive 'arrangement with' extant sets of possibilities and constraints. Cultural apprenticeship is an example of such an arrangement, one particular to a historically and locally specific cultural fraction (though similar community cultures could be found elsewhere in the UK).

Gender locations as discrete entities, on the other hand, are particularly defined through the ways in which production/reproduction relations are understood and negotiated. The ways in which girls describe and explain the gendered division of labour in employment and in the family are differently accented for each of the gender locations. In this context, it is equally important to take note of what girls *do not* or *cannot* describe/explain. As a consequence, ... some case studies are much more extended than others as well as containing differently contoured information.

#### 4.2.1 *Non-transforming positions*

##### Preconsciousness

##### Summary definition

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Unrecognised and hence unreflected acceptance of patriarchal relations in production and reproduction, resting on practical understandings drawn from a clearly bounded social world. Hypothetically, preconsciousness is a universal location of origin and is certainly increasingly a residual location for those who are not in a position to move beyond it. By 11/12 years of age, the characteristics of girls thus located suggest that structured social divisions (class fraction, race/ethnic origin,...) are heavily implicated in promoting/obstructing such movement and its 'scheduling'.

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##### Case 1/1 : Aileen : Wilhelma School

Aileen has always lived in the Wilhelma locality, and has relatives nearby. She likes it here because she has neighbourhood friends; in her spare time she plays with them and with her cousins, goes swimming regularly, and plays the cymbals in a local children's band run by her uncle. Aileen would have preferred to go to the

comprehensive her cousins all go to, but her mother wanted her to attend the local school, and she is neither academically or socially very happy after a term and a half so far at Wilhelma. Aileen has difficulties with her schoolwork and especially dislikes science\*; she is very timid, has a slight stutter, and is physically waif-like. She tends to be marginalised by her peers. On the whole she likes her teachers, but sometimes "when I put my hand up they come to me but when other people put their hand up the teacher goes to them first...or I have to wait and wait."

Aileen lives with her mother and a half-sister a good two years younger than herself. She and her mother get on each other's nerves; they don't talk much. Her closest relationships are with two girl cousins; they give her pocket money and sweets from their own stocks. Her parents' marriage broke up many years ago, but her father still lives fairly locally and Aileen occasionally goes to stay with him and his second family at weekends. She doesn't know how her father makes a living; her mother has not had paid employment as long as she can remember, and they have no contact with Aileen's sister's father. Neither does Aileen know much about what sorts of jobs her various relatives have or have had, except that an uncle was once a factory cleaner, her Nan used to clean in a pub, and an aunt helps out in a local cafe. She does know that young people can't easily get jobs immediately on leaving school these days, and is at a loss to give any examples of the kinds of jobs local people actually do, still less can she say whether women or men find it more difficult to secure work. However, Aileen herself would wait until a local job comes up rather than taking employment in another locality. She wants to stay where she feels at home.

When she was little Aileen wanted to be a nurse, though she's no idea why. The thought of blood and peculiar hospital smells had put her off it anyway (a standard sample response in this connection). She now wants to work in a cafe, like the local one she visits with her cousin when they go swimming. She sees herself as doing the clearing up, like she does for her mother at home sometimes and as she sees the women who work in the cafe doing on her visits. Otherwise, she might perhaps work in a pottery factory - she likes potting at school - about which she'd recently watched a TV programme. Aileen hasn't asked anyone about any of the jobs she's been interested in, although a couple of neighbours were nurses and her aunt has a cafe job. Were she a boy, though, she'd not want to work in a cafe: "Well, it's a girls' job, isn't it?" Aileen thinks women work in cafes "because they like clearing up...My Mum clears up the house...And they like cooking", whereas men work in factories and they teach. Women can be teachers too, but if they work in factories they do different sorts of jobs there (machinists vs car assembly). She remarked that when her mother sends for an electrician, it's always a man who comes, concluding that "men know what to do, like fix cars, ladies just help people" and that were women to try to get such male-typed jobs, employers wouldn't take them on because "they think women can't work fast enough." Aileen hasn't a view on whether this is all really so or not; nor can she think of any explanations for these various patterns beyond the general fact the the sexes have different interests and that women don't like to do men's jobs. But she was very clear that women's role as childbearers and childrearsers is what marks them off from men as far as the gendered distribution of tasks is concerned.

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\* Aileen said she didn't like the smell of acid in the school labs. Her science teacher allowed her and some other girls to sit in a small side-room, where the smell was less pungent. All the boys in her class remained in the main laboratory area.

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**Case 3/28 : Donna : Sternrise School : West Indian British**

Donna is the fifth of six children her mother is struggling to bring up alone and on social security, though she would like to find employment for financial reasons; years ago, when the family lived in Kent, she had worked in a factory. All Donna's siblings still live at home; three have left school, of which two have jobs. Her eldest brother, now 20, manages a bakery shop after having had several different kinds of work; her 18 year old sister is on a job creation office work placement in the local council's finance department (and is helping Donna practice typing at home). Her second brother has recently left school at sixteen into unemployment, but would like to be an electrician.

Donna herself, though very shy and lacking in confidence at school, has always dreamed of becoming a model, which she sees as a glamorous job with high pay. She had recently seen an ad in the paper seeking child models, 'no experience required', so she rang up about it and was asked to forward a photograph - which she'd not yet got around to doing. Donna has no sources of advice, information or support in thinking about or planning her future, finding it very difficult to talk to teachers about anything at all. Her mother had come with her to see her form tutor about her option choices (which she'd recently made), but Donna had not raised the idea of becoming a model at all. Donna is in the B-stream at Sternrise, and her options reflect this: she'll be taking mostly practical subjects, with business studies as her "fallback" insurance for the labour market. If asked by teachers/advisors what she would like to be, Donna tells them she is considering fashion design (she sews dolls' clothes as a hobby) or secretarial work. It is clear that Donna suspects her dream aspirations to be unreachable, but equally that she has no desire to be a secretary either. It is simply that her perception of occupational structure is highly restricted, so that secretarial work is what seems the only realistic option in what she knows - from her own family's experiences - to be a depressed labour market.

In fact, Donna has quite a wide range of interests, though it is evident that these are anchored in her life outside school. She is out and about with her girlfriends on the neighbourhood quite a lot (they play football in the local girls' team), and she is keen on soul music. At the same time she is very self-conscious in the school context, suspecting she won't be getting the "loads of A-levels" you need nowadays to be sure of finding employment. On the whole, Donna talked reasonably easily about her family and out-of-school activities; once she felt more relaxed in discussion, she was also able to reveal what she'd really like to be, even though she knows her chances are very slim. But when topics connected with schooling were broached, Donna's responses became monosyllabic and almost inaudible. She similarly found it difficult to talk about the local labour market and employment in general - it is something about which she feels she knows very little, not surprisingly. Donna's view of the world is also axiomatically gendered: she neither considers nor questions a division of labour by sex in any sphere of life, because women and men simply do different things. Men are stronger, and heterosexual masculinity is associated with a specific range of interests and legitimate activities. This is why girls and boys aspire to different kinds of jobs: boys don't want to be secretaries because they would be accused of being "queer". Therefore, were she a boy, Donna supposes she'd want to be a mechanic.

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### Fatalism

#### Summary definition

Largely unreflective submission to patriarchal relations in production and reproduction, resting on the principle of 'separate and unequal'. The location is consistently defined through the adoption of a patriarchal worldview in which pattern descriptions are androcentric, female and male activity spheres are separate, and women are deficient and subordinate to men. Male power and authority are thus legitimate and 'natural'. Fatalism is a form of consciousness readily transported through the gender code, specified onto working-class cultural traditions but differentially distributed over within-class fractions. It is thus associated with the so-called 'lower' working-class, but accreting over time a wider membership as a form of retreat from engagement with structured contradictions in production-reproduction relations.

#### Case 1/28 : Emily : Sternrise School

Emily's father is a newspaper printer in at least the third generation of occupational inheritance, but Emily doesn't see this as distinctive in any way. Her father doesn't talk much about his work, and Emily is not at all interested in or knowledgeable about it. For as long as Emily can recall, her mother has had part-time cleaning jobs "for the money", but her work is of no salience otherwise in Emily's eyes. Her mother had worked in the greetings cards printing industry before she had Emily's brother, who is in his third year at Sternrise and can't wait to leave school. He wants to be a bricklayer or a mechanic. Emily herself likes practical and varied schoolwork which she can see as 'useful' - housecraft, certainly, but equally maths, where there's lots of drawing to do. A B-stream pupil, Emily doesn't see herself as very good at maths and she dislikes science unless they do experiments. She fears she won't do well later on; after the second year school seems to consist of studying for exams, which her brother is currently finding disagreeable. Also, studying could well interfere with her dancing classes.

Emily automatically thinks of the labour market as sex segregated. It wouldn't be possible for everyone to find jobs locally - there are more residents than there are places of work - but those who do are women, and they work in shops; most men have office jobs up in town. Of her own volition, Emily cannot think of any jobs in which both sexes are employed, remarking that "like, you wouldn't find a man as a secretary...or *(long pause)* bosses, you wouldn't find many women bosses...or the bakers, the women serve and the men bake." When she thinks about the reasons for these patterns, Emily talks only of what men will not do and of their ability to keep power in men's hands. Men are the bosses "because if your Dad owns a company and he has a son, it normally goes to the son...because they think girls can't do it on their own." If Emily stops to consider it, she concludes that this could be unfair, but for herself it is of no concern. As far as her own aspirations are concerned, Emily would think it strange even to consider skilled manual or technical/scientific occupations as within the range of the hypothetically possible. From looking at clothes catalogues and TV, she had thought of becoming a model, but having recently read some information about it in the school library she decided that the training and early rising are

too arduous. However, she has always wanted to be a modern disco dancer (as 'Legs & Co.' on TV) and regularly attends a Saturday ballet class. She's heard from her friend there that to get into this kind of work you have to go to a dancing school, but apart from this Emily hasn't sought or found out anything more specific. She supposes that were she a boy, she'd want to become a footballer.

#### 4.2.2 *Potentially transforming positions*

##### Marginality

##### Summary definition

Reflexive and potentially transforming position in relation to the gender code, facilitated by educational achievement and a distancing from clear-cut loyalties/tradition. In this study, high-achieving girls from ambiguous/complex social backgrounds (class, race/ethnic, family membership...) are characteristically located here. The commitment to meritocratic individualism and equal opportunities combined with a degree of social marginality fosters sharper challenge to patriarchal relations in both production and reproduction; but structured inequalities of opportunity in education by themselves heavily reduce many such girls' chances of attaining their aspirations, in addition to the pressures favouring ultimate drift towards accommodative resolutions.

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##### Case 3/10 : Eleanor : Dame's Trust School

Eleanor's interview is characterised by long silences, hesitations and reticences; underlying this is a combination of active reflection, shyness and some difficulty in discussing topics which bear directly on the fact that her educational and occupational interests have developed in a counter-sex-stereotypical direction. Eleanor is especially attracted to maths and sciences and her current aspiration, though strongly influenced by her mother, is to become a police forensic scientist. She has recently chosen her options with these interests in mind, but also to retain openness in case she changes her mind.\* With two formmates, she also goes to an evening computer club held at a nearby school.

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\* Her options were : physics, chemistry, German, drama and textiles craft & technology. Each pupil at Dame's Trust has to choose an aesthetic and a practical option; Eleanor had no wish to do either Home Economics or PE, and selected the two last-listed options accordingly. Like many girls' schools, Dame's Trust had no facilities for CDT or similar subjects. It had begun to offer a computer studies course, but facilities were very limited and the course was oversubscribed - it was seen as largely oriented towards business studies (i.e. data entry and word processing). That Eleanor chose two sciences, and that neither was biology, is significant within the Dame's Trust option system, which prescribes one science for all pupils. This means in practice that all those pupils who do not wish to continue with science find themselves in biology.

Eleanor's mother has acceded to convention both at work and in the family, but is not altogether happy about this. She is keen to guide her daughter towards ambitious and relatively unusual occupational aspirations. She enjoyed working as branch manageress for a fashion chain at the then upper end of the mass retail market before she had Eleanor, her only child. Currently a telephonist at a central wholesale market, Eleanor thinks her mother would prefer a more "glamorous" job. She experiences a sharp difference between her mother's engagement and her father's distance, remarking, in a tone of puzzled thoughtfulness, that "I don't think she is that bored, 'cos she goes out to work part-time. {pause} Sometimes she gets a bit {pause} funny, where she wants to go out and do something wild!" Her mother continually encourages her, emphasising how important it is to get out and see something of the world before marriage ties you down; but Eleanor added dismissively that her father "don't really care...He don't even {8secs pause} he just lets me get on with it. {3secs pause} He just leaves it all to my Mum." Eleanor's father was a delivery van driver, with the same firm for ten years until he was suddenly made redundant in 1980; he's now an insurance company postal messenger clerk. Despite this, unemployment is not a salient feature of Eleanor's rather vague and detached view of labour market issues. More important for her is the undesirable nature of the jobs available in the area in which she has lived all her life: "ordinary jobs, in shops and things like that...Offices. Factories." Eleanor's relatives all come from the same area, though some have moved out to the Home Counties, and she herself would prefer to live in the country. Apart from the computer club, Eleanor doesn't go out much - she prefers to stay in and read.

She and her mother discuss Eleanor's future a great deal. Eleanor firmly intends to take A-levels; she would like any sort of scientific job, but it is education and not production that dominates her concerns. She found it difficult to give examples of the kinds of jobs available even in computing, her main current hobby. It was her mother who suggested forensic work, in order to accommodate Eleanor's scientific bent with her mother's view of the police force as exciting and of high status. Both of them have started actively using the school's resources to find out more about it. Until she came to Dame's Trust, Eleanor had wanted to be a teacher, a job she saw as like "another version of your mum". Both her own and her mother's opinions of teaching have fallen since then; subsequently, becoming a secretary, on the grounds that it would be easy sitting down "painting nails and doing nothing", occupied a brief interlude in her thoughts.

Eleanor says her current aspiration would not be different were she a boy, and was initially reluctant to acknowledge the existence of gender divisions in production at all. In considering education, she knows her interests are seen by her peers as odd but her response is to rate many girls as lacking in ambition and adventurousness rather than intelligence when it comes to studying science. In this connection, she added that girls stick to female-typed jobs because they don't want to be seen as different; it is this, and employer prejudice, which account for occupational segregation by sex. It was then Eleanor herself who spontaneously made the linkage between production and reproduction: "Girls are supposed to stay at home and have babies and boys are supposed to go out and get jobs - as plumbers and that." This is why girls are less ambitious, because "they know that probably most of them will just settle down in the end with a family, and won't go out to work anyway." In Eleanor's view, it is children who "tie you down", and not marriage. She sees herself as different from most; and certainly refuses to contemplate being a "bored slave" at home whilst her husband has a more interesting life. And as long as she tries hard enough, Eleanor can't imagine not achieving her aspirations, whatever these may ultimately be.

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**Case 3/20 : Nadia : Sternrise School : Turkish Cypriot father**

Nadia, who at 14 wants to be a pilot or a space researcher, is in the A-stream of her year and is regarded by her teachers as very able. The third of five children, she was born and has always lived locally; all her relatives live nearby and she likes it very much here, though she can well imagine moving away from London altogether to work when she's older. Her parents divorced many years ago; Nadia is no longer in touch with her father, who came to the UK when he was sixteen. She has no feelings of affinity or interest in her Turkish Cypriot connections - on the contrary, Nadia is keen to underline that she is thoroughly English in all respects.

Upward social mobility is very important to both Nadia and her mother, who currently works (together with a number of female relatives) full-time in a food processing factory. Nadia's 17 year old sister has a "good" clerical/secretarial job in a bank, after having taken a vocational course at college. Her elder brother, now 19, did not do well at school, but took an alternative route to 'bettering himself' by joining the army after being unable to find anything other than casual and temporary employment. Nadia, upon whom her mother's highest hopes are pinned, comments that

"Every mum wants something better for their kids...I want to make something of myself, something more - and I don't let anyone influence me...In good ways I'm influenced by my mum - she helps me all the way, she doesn't say I've got to, she says 'work hard and then you'll do well', say if I'm at home doing my homework."

Nadia knows that the labour market is highly competitive and unemployment high. The more positive qualifications people have to offer, the better are the chances of finding employment and the better are the kinds of jobs open to them. Nadia regards herself as intelligent, someone who wants a highly-paid, exciting and out-of-the-ordinary job, and she has every confidence that nothing will prove an obstacle to reaching her aims. Since she particularly enjoys challenging subjects (especially physics, in her eyes the most important science) she has changed her mind over the last year or so about what she wants to be - until then, Nadia had thought of becoming a lawyer or a journalist. She had discarded the idea of becoming a teacher some years back, on the grounds that it was not a sufficiently high level aspiration for her. A high salary which enables one to "...buy things and try to have a better life" is explicitly important to her, "not just for food but for luxuries too....like a decent home, TV and a car...to be able to buy things...so you can enjoy life more."

Nadia is very clear about the implications of particular sets of option choices as statements about individual ability, potential and personal motivation. She has chosen her options with a view to securing a broad range of useful academic qualifications for her future career and in order to avoid those subjects she sees as easy, boring (e.g. CDT) and "not real subjects" (e.g. home economics, child development). These latter are what girls who are educationally failing take: "If they're not clever at school the best thing they can do is get a husband with a good job and have money coming in the house."

Nadia is, of course, in favour of equal opportunities in employment and also knows that there is still some discrimination against women here. She is optimistic that things will continue to improve as socialisation and

schooling practices change and pay inequalities narrow; women's careers are just as important as men's. She does not, as yet, realise that childrearing breaks generally place insuperable constraints on women's career development, but Nadia in any case has little time for women who take on a traditional family-oriented role. One of her current role models is a (feminist) teacher at Sternrise, who "is a good example of not just sitting at home and looking after kids - she goes out and tries to get what she wants." This fits in with Nadia's general rejection of what is associated with conventional femininity, expressed in terms of her characterisation of women's jobs as easy, boring and "pansyish", the very opposite of what she wants for herself. The person Nadia said she most admired was Joan of Arc - an appropriate, but also ironic choice, for her reason was "because she *sacrificed* herself for what she believed in" (my italics).

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### Codebending

#### Summary definition

Reflexive and potentially transforming position in relation to the gender code, facilitated by educational achievement and cultural capital, but of a nature which directs educational-occupational decisions into somewhat more potentially accommodative channels. Critical awareness of gender divisions is more highly developed for production than for reproduction, but in this study, the spectrum of occupations to which girls from the achieved middle-class fraction are nearest in cultural terms are the liberal and public service professions. Such girls are well-situated to achieve their aspirations, but their corresponding likely future production locations together with commitment to the primacy of mothering point towards ultimate drift towards accommodative resolutions.

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#### Case 1/21 : Jane : Sternrise School

Jane's father is an advertising/sales manager up in town; her mother is a primary school teacher, who also does some evening support teaching for prison warders. She knows quite a lot about her parents' jobs. In her words her father has worked his way up to a position where he can now boss people around, which he likes. He would like his daughter to have a job she enjoys and is good at; he'd like her to go into his line of work, but she herself is not keen on it because she sees it as sitting in an office all day - she wants something exciting. In fact she's not talked much to her parents about her aspiration to be a journalist, though her mother has said she thinks it a good idea. Jane thinks her mother's positive stance is because she's an English specialist; she sees herself, too, as always having been good at English and writing, which is why she thought of carrying on with it as a career. "[My Mum] does get rather tired but I think she does enjoy [her job]. After she left school she went to teachers' training college and she's been teaching ever since". Jane has already decided to stay on into the sixth form "to get more exams." The need for higher education has not impressed itself upon her as yet (neither of her parents went to university). She remains open-minded about her future, conscious that she may well change her mind and that access to journalism may be difficult. She specifically commented that her early aspiration to become a supermarket cashier was based on a restricted knowledge about general occupational structure; now she feels herself to be

better-informed, though she continues to speak much more confidently about education than production. Jane has an active extra-curricular life, centred on dance - though no longer ballet, having unsuccessfully tried to gain a place at the Royal Ballet School last year.

Jane's knowledge of the labour market centres on the distinction between 'normal' and 'exciting' jobs : locally you get normal jobs, like shopwork; in central London you find more exciting jobs, like her own aspiration, journalism. Similarly, were she a boy, given the same talents she'd probably have the same aspiration, but she certainly would "not want to be the usual football player". Occupational segregation by sex is a taken-for-granted fact for Jane, but not an acceptable one. She places her faith in the belief that things have changed and, she hopes, will continue to change as more women enter non-traditional occupations.

The school and its culture are central to her understandings of her world, including shaping her views on gender divisions. Jane's views mirror the school's official policy in support of equal opportunities (*not* anti-sexism). A directly feminist challenge is not encouraged at Sternrise, but A-stream girls like Jane are expected and encouraged to achieve academically on a wide front. However, after she had explained at length the benefits of co-ed schooling for girls, she added "That's why my Mum sent me here because she said if she had two girls she'd send us to the local girls' school. But if I came here [my brother will] have more chance of getting into the school - it does count if you've got sisters or brothers at the school". Jane was not conscious of the contradictory implications of this account, but as it happened she was doing very well so far!

"A boy in our class, when we were writing down what we thought other people's jobs would be he just put me down as a typist, my friend as a secretary, and all the girls as things like secretaries and hairdressers. He just thought that's what women should do.....We all did think it was a bit sexist"

Q : What did the girls write for the boys?

{laughs} "Most people put them as unemployed! But I put two down as DJs 'cos I couldn't think of anything else, but sort of banking, things like that..There's more choice of jobs for boys than for girls but perhaps by the time I've left school it will have changed"

Q : What's making it change, or how could it be changed more?

"Perhaps women sticking to their rights, trying to keep getting jobs that men usually do instead of just wanting to be a secretary or a typist, or just a housewife"

Q : So women should change themselves, then. But will they run into any difficulties when they start doing that?

"Yes probably! They'll run into men who don't agree with it along the way"

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1/25 : Frances : Sternrise School : Canadian/Ghanaian

With a (white) Canadian mother and a Ghanaian father, Frances' ethnic-cultural background is quite unusual amongst her peers in the first-year A-stream at Sternrise. Frances is accustomed to travel and to the idea of moving to another country to live. They visit her mother's relatives regularly and had tried (unsuccessfully) to establish a living out in Ghana when Frances was seven. She herself wants to live in Canada when she's older, so, although she's aware that the local labour market is not buoyant, she dismisses its relevance to her future. Frances doesn't have a very clear idea of the kind of jobs available locally, but she can accurately describe them in abstract terms : "It's really just 'normal' jobs - it's not a posh area where I live, you see, so...it's...well, working class."

Frances' mother gave up her primary teaching job in an inner city school when she had her second child, not long before Frances, who was attending the same school, transferred to Sternrise. She had always worked full-time until then; she met her husband and had Frances whilst they were students, and it remained financially necessary for her to work during the years it took for him to become professionally qualified (he had arrived in England with no qualifications at all). Frances' mother had found working in an inner-city school very demanding, so she was pleased to leave and has no plans to return to full-time teaching; she does part-time home tutoring, which she likes better.

Frances herself has no desire to become either a teacher or an accountant. Teaching is rather too ordinary; accountancy does not involve much social interaction, whereas Frances sees herself as verbally and linguistically talented, like her mother. She can recall wanting to be a bus driver when she was young, but her first serious aspiration was to be a vet. However, "it was a choice between liking animals and being unemployed, there are too many vets around now, nearly everybody wants to be a vet...so I chose something nobody else wants to be...and it'd be fun." Frances wants to be a lawyer, and has already discussed with her parents what the educational requirements are. She is very keen to achieve her aspiration, as she has always wanted to do something where "people recognise you. 'Cos if you do something normal [they don't]." On the other hand, Frances sees her current aspiration as a symbolic representation of the kind of job status and content she would like to have rather than as a narrowly fixed specific goal; she expects that she might change her mind by the time she gets to her third year and option choice decisions. It is evident that Frances collects and absorbs a great deal of information about and interpretations of the social world both from parents and teachers; she links, for example, jobs with lifestyle by discussing the effects of social origin on life chances :

"You basically find that people who've gone to private, maybe paying schools, have the best chance of getting [into] a big firm...People who haven't ever really come from a posh family, they've got to work harder at it in a way, they haven't learned how to be posh and well-spoken...So they don't really think about having posh jobs, 'cos if your mum and dad don't have posh jobs you don't think about it - but if your mum's the Queen that's what you'd think about yourself, that you're a princess, but if they aren't you just don't think about it 'cos you know you never will be."

Her parents' understandings of her father's experiences and her mother's cultural background have shaped her perceptions of the world in many respects : Frances is aware of social inequalities, but sees her father as having worked hard to achieve success even though it has been more difficult for him, and so the way to overcome disadvantage is by individual talent and effort :

"You have to work from the bottom upwards. My dad,...he was a cleaner and then he worked in a car park and now he's got his own accountancy firm. A lot of young people nowadays think you can go straight to the top...Even if you have loads of qualifications you can still be on the dole. If you're on the dole you should try to get something not very many people want to get and then work your way up."

The individualised 'pioneer spirit' which remains a strong element in Canadian culture reinforces this perspective - Frances relates women's occupational distribution directly (if inaccurately!) to it : "Women don't go in for things like being lumberjacks - not in Britain they don't, in places like Canada they do, 'cos it's just so rugged out there."

Frances is well-settled at Sternrise and certainly has no difficulties with her schoolwork. She is confident that she will be able to achieve what she sets out for, both educationally and occupationally; she knows she is not class disadvantaged, she never alludes to ethnic/race disadvantage, and she sees women's disadvantage in employment as gradually, if slowly, disappearing. At the time of the interview, Frances' form tutor was encouraging a lot of class discussion on gender topics.\* Frances saw the origins of gendered patterns as lying in pupil behaviour itself, as structured by socialisation, maturation, and physical strength variations. Thus the girls in her form "usually get higher marks" than the boys because they mature earlier; boys are "built better" for doing PE; girls and boys have headstarts in different subjects, such as textiles and CDT, because of their gender socialisation experiences. Equal opportunities to study all subjects can overcome these problems, so that Frances' only complaint about Sternrise was that it does not yet have mixed PE/games: "If PE was mixed maybe girls would get to know boys better. Boys don't know what girls are capable of, girls don't know what boys are capable of." Characteristically, Frances concentrates on boys rather than on girls' disadvantages in these respects : it is boys who are more constrained by gender socialisation and maturational differences, "and girls don't really have that feeling, that this is girls' stuff and this is boys' stuff. Boys do...Like a lady can wear trousers, but a boy can't wear a skirt."

Frances carries over the same approach towards occupational segregation by sex, which arises through gendered preferences : men like "macho" jobs such as building, women don't like to be car mechanics "'cos they're too fussy over their nails!...It's not that they'd have any difficulty to get in." She sees attitudes as gradually changing, with qualifications as the way forward, something to which employers will respond, if only because it's good for their image to be seen to be fair to women.

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\*The implementation of LEA equal opportunities policy was being promoted amongst some of the staff, and the presence of the research project had prompted some teachers into (at times defensive) action.



On the other hand, Frances' appreciation of the links between gender divisions at work and in the family includes an uncritical acceptance of conventional understandings of married women's employment. For Frances, top lawyers are still mainly men because of privileged class access rather than gender inequalities : women from middle class backgrounds, even where well-qualified, do not need to work because the men they marry generally earn enough to support the family. It is men from affluent backgrounds who become lawyers; other men, and less privileged women, are excluded. Frances explains her own mother's employment history in these terms, and then generalises the pattern to account for women's labour market distribution as a whole :

"[Children do make a difference to women because] you have to leave your job for about a year...and some women don't like to leave their kids. My mum didn't, that's why she took me to [the school where she worked]...When I was born my dad was still in college, so she had to...And with my little sister, she was giving up before she came."

Frances knows that working class women, like the cleaners at her school, must find employment because they need the money, and that those who have children are faced with problems since childcare is expensive. But if their husbands earned more, these women would give up their jobs :

"And maybe one day the man will find something and the lady won't have to work, or eventually the child would grow up...When my dad came to England he didn't have any qualifications and he was trying to get a degree in accountancy, you see. But he had to work [as well] and that's why he did the cleaning. My mum took me to [her] school when I was 18 months old - that was the only way they could manage."

### 4.2.3 Transitional locations

#### Avoidance

##### Summary definition

As a transitional location, avoidance is rooted in conflicting messages and structured contradictions, but by definition has relatively weak prospects for productive challenge. It comprises surface, if ambiguous, acceptance of gender divisions in production and (more so) reproduction with underlying hesitant reflection, anxiety and a sense of powerlessness surrounding disjunctions between interests/aspirations and the chances of realising these educationally and occupationally. In this study, it is the transitional location likely to be pursued by working-class girls of indigenous UK origin where primary or secondary habitus do not provide a secure basis for educational 'success'.

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#### Case 3/5 : Louise : Wilhelma School

Louise had some difficulty in recalling the subject options she'd recently chosen; in fact her choices were marked by apparently direct market and gender vocational relevance.\* For Louise, there could be no other logic to apply to option choice other than that of the vocationally instrumental, but in her case "none of the things at school have anything to do with what I want to be when I'm older." She had given little thought to the whole affair and had discussed it with no-one; having missed the handing-in deadline through illness and not knowing what to choose, she just filled up her form ad hoc.

Louise has always wanted to be a pop singer - she doesn't want to have a "normal job like everyone else has...like a robot..I want to do something with my life...I want some action!" At various times she had also considered becoming an actress, a professional swimmer; or joining the mounted police or the Household Cavalry "but you can't if you're a girl...I did want to, but...(trails away)" She was reluctant to pursue the topic. However, she expects not to achieve her aspiration, a prospect which fills her with anxiety: she worriedly remarked, several times, that she really doesn't know what she'll do if she cannot be a singer. Louise thinks she lacks the musical and performing talent, adding as comforting afterthought that these days "they do all the backing tracks and the music, that covers up most of the singing." Her lack of confidence leads her to reject the idea of learning to play an instrument or read music altogether; she had also intended to audition for some West End musicals, but "I just lost my nerve...plus I didn't know how to

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\* Geography, business studies, computer studies, cookery, art/design, and science at work. The Wilhelma option system requires a science and a humanity; for Louise, the latter meant geography because she wanted to avoid continuing with a foreign language. Wilhelma school guides pupils into the science at work course either because they dislike science or because of poor performance levels. Pupils often think they will enjoy the course when they read the options booklet - it is full of references to practical activities and more 'exciting' topics, such as photography. Louise had completely forgotten that this was on her option list; she also dislikes maths. Although she has no desire to work in an office, she had nevertheless, like the majority of Wilhelma girls, chosen business and computer studies options 'for something to fall back on.'

get up there and I had no-one to go with." She feels handicapped by lack of knowledge and contacts to get a foot in the door. Louise also feels silly talking about her hopes to her mother (who simply says she'd rather Louise were a singer than on the dole) but discusses it with her mother's friend, who has the same aspiration. Louise's experience is that everyone just laughs at people like her; she's tried to get schoolmates to set up a band together, but with no success. Most pop musicians are men, there are few women singers and bands - "It's about time they had a successful girls' group."

Louise is uninterested in the 'normal' labour market. She knows that jobs are generally scarce, and, in conformity with local consensus views, thinks girl schoolleavers have better chances of finding jobs than boys, since "you don't see men secretaries." Beyond this, she's no idea what kind of work local people do; she assumes most have jobs up in town. Louise herself is the youngest of four children; her 17 year old sister - who had wanted to be a model - drifted into employment on market stalls after leaving Wilhelma the previous year. Both brothers work on market stalls too. Their parents split up some years ago, and Louise seldom sees her father. Her stepfather works on the charter excursion riverboats, she's no idea what he does; her mother, by trade a waitress, is currently unemployed.

Generally Louise is a lively, gay respondent, despite her pessimism about her chances of realising her hopes. However, whenever the discussion turns to gender issues she becomes very subdued and hesitant. She is perfectly clear about the nature of gender divisions in production and reproduction, but prefers to push away critical reflection; glimpses of anger and resentment are overlain by resignation. Women themselves focus only on office jobs; but then men sexually harass women in the workplace and think they should be in the home anyway. "They take us for granted," Louise concluded with a sigh.

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## Struggle

### Summary definition

As a transitional location, struggle is rooted in conflicting messages and structured contradictions; it encompasses relatively good prospects for productive challenge because the tensions are expressed and struggled with more openly and actively. In this study, it is strongly associated with subjects caught in competing awareness and solidarity traps between gender, class and especially race/ethnicity. The direction of development of critical consciousness in relation to these major dimensions of social cleavage varies according to immediate cultural and educational contexts. Gender divisions in production/reproduction are recognised and subject to critical reflection and challenge, but intense contradiction arises between the principles of achievement (in education and production) and of ascription (in reproduction).

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### Case 1/11 : Tracy : Dame's Trust School

Tracy's parents manage a small newsagent/sweet shop belonging to a national chain. However, her parents' actual division of labour is conventional - her father is the 'boss' and earns more; her mother is wholly responsible for the domestic labour and childcare as well as working part-time downstairs in the shop - where the content of her work is indistinguishable from her husband's, as far as Tracy can see. Tracy is faced with a number of disjunctions in this situation, which she cannot resolve for herself - women's role on the family seems fixed and natural, but it is clear that as a result they are disadvantaged in employment.

Her own experiences, too, have given her a strong sense of the gendering of activities: boys called her "horrible names" when she tried playing football, so now she "feels funny, like a tomboy" in sports (Dame's Trust had introduced football into the games curriculum). Tracy likes sports, though, and went to some length to explain that hockey is a good game for girls - it's less physically risky than football because the ball is small! However, in general Tracy is socially settled at her new school and sees herself as doing well. She is accustomed to moving around the country and having to find her way around in new communities because of her parents' work; they've been in London for three years now, and although Tracy prefers to live in the country she's come to like the hustle and diversions of city life.

The family live above the shop they manage, so Tracy is well-informed about her parents' work and involved in helping them out a bit. It was difficult, however, for her to assess the nature and distinctiveness of the locality and its labour market. Her view focussed rather on London as a whole, its relatively good opportunities acting as a magnet for people from the provinces; but for Tracy, the occupational structure of the metropolis presented itself as populated by shops and market stalls, the odd teacher, and some offices up town. In these sectors, she saw no occupational, i.e. horizontal, segregation by sex. She herself recalls wanting to be a nurse when she was small, and although this is still in her mind, she is also considering becoming a policewoman or owning her own shop. In all these jobs, it is the status of 'being in charge' that attracts Tracy (although her interpretations of nursing and policework are not necessarily accurate in this respect). This is linked to her perceptions of her

parents: Tracy recognises the sources of her mother's discontent, but her sympathies remain with her father. "I'd love to have customers like ours, who say there's not many people who stay at the shop, my Dad's been there the longest of all, they say he's good and cheerful...I'd like to follow on from him...She's bad-tempered, swears a lot...I suppose I'd like to be like my Dad, because...he's got a good job and I think I learn more from him, he spends more time with me than my Mum does." In fact, Tracy's mother is overburdened with two preschool children, assisting in the shop at short notice, and a husband who refuses to do any of the domestic labour on the grounds that he's too tired and busy as the boss of the shop. It is vertical segregation by sex that is salient for Tracy, but in valuing and aspiring to be 'in charge', like her father, she is faced with understandings which disqualify her: men work harder and have more talent, and women have to do the housework and the childcare. She cannot find a way out of the doll's house, and she isn't sure whether she ought to want to in the first place.

"[Women don't get as far up as men] because of intelligence, like...because when you're at school sometimes the boys want to study but the girls are too worried about their hair....[Men have a wider choice of jobs] because women are mostly housewives...and design dresses, or things like that, in their spare time. Men just go out and find whatever job they can."

Q: Why are most women housewives?

"Because they have children and they've got to cook the dinner and clean up the house."

Q: Why do the women have to do that?

"Er - because the men can't be bothered."

Q: Why do the women carry on doing it, why don't they tell the men to do it too?

"I expect it's just like a law, what's natural, something like that."

#### Case 1/13 : Michelle : Dame's Trust School : Jamaican British

Michelle is the youngest of four in her family, all living with their mother, a full-time pediatric hospital nurse. Her parents divorced when she was three (nine years ago), and her father now works as a bus driver in the USA. Michelle has been to visit him, and although she doesn't much like either the States (where she felt an outsider) or the unsettled atmosphere in his new family, he remains emotionally significant to her. Michelle likes and admires her mother more than anyone else, but she takes considerable notice of her father's advice too. He tells her always to speak up for herself and to be wary of placing her trust in others. Michelle's courage sometimes fails her and she finds she's not always taken seriously when she does speak her mind, especially at school.

Supported very strongly by her family, Michelle sees educational achievement as important, but is often frustrated by what she experiences as a disruptive, noisy classroom atmosphere at Dame's Trust - for which she blames her classmates rather than the teachers. Michelle undoubtedly has a difficult time of it: she explicitly voices her annoyance with her peers and they laugh at her motivation to achieve. At home, there is no shortage of positive reinforcement and encouragement from her mother, but her aunt, a data information clerk with BTel, also exercises some influence. She encourages Michelle's interest in computers, who (since she knows little about the range and levels of computing occupations) sees her aunt's job as quite elevated. But her mother evidently thinks her daughter could aim higher, so her support is lukewarm even though she fosters the general interest

by having bought Michelle a home computer to be used for educational purposes rather than for games. Michelle is uncertain about whether she ought to accede to her mother's reservations, because it is unclear to her just why her mother is unenthusiastic. Michelle's alternative current aspiration to become a barrister, an idea she got from watching 'Crown Court'. Initially Michelle ranked this as her second choice, but subsequently remarked that were she a boy, this would be her aspiration; here there is a hint of the conflicts Michelle is experiencing, conflicts which do not arise with computing in that her aunt acts as a direct role model.

The potential of new technology jobs is something that Michelle's siblings have all picked up on. Her eldest sister, at 25, is currently retraining at an ITEC; her 23 year old brother is a BTel telephone engineer; and her second brother, ages 18, is doing an FE clerical course. All of them went to college to get "good" qualifications after leaving school at 16, and Michelle has every intention of following in their footsteps. She likes schoolwork and has no problems with any of her subjects. Outside school she has plenty of hobbies, but they are all rather solitary and explicitly educational activities which she engages in at home. Her socially precarious position in the classroom is matched by a preference for spending time on her own. On the other hand, Michelle has had to get used to being alone and amusing herself - her mother has worked full-time for as long as she can recall, and there is a six year gap between herself and her nearest sibling, a brother. The family have also moved house around London several times over the course of her childhood.

In discussing gender divisions, Michelle was both critical of men and resistant to acknowledging the existence of gender divisions either at work or, especially, in the family. Her mother has talked a lot to her daughter about the stress of her divorce, warning her that men are inclined to be selfish, only prepared to behave responsibly when it suits them. Michelle cannot explain why women put up with this: "they just do", she remarked in a resigned tone. Similarly, Michelle scornfully takes the view that although jobs are locally scarce and men are harder-hit by unemployment than are women, nevertheless "men don't want to work." She struggles against agreeing that women and men generally do different jobs, taking refuge in what ought to be the case rather than what is the case, but ultimately returns to her critical stance on men in general: "they mostly think women are made just for looking after men...They don't want to believe that they can do something." Clearly, Michelle is experiencing some conflict about what her own interests and aspirations are and what constitutes appropriate femininity; she also suspects there are links between gender divisions in production and in reproduction, but cannot yet find an acceptable way of understanding and resisting what happens in the family. Despite her mother's experience and her repeated warnings about men's qualities, Michelle - very painfully and hesitantly - remarked that she would like to marry and that she would expect this to make a difference to what she would be able to achieve in life:

Q : Why does marriage make a difference to women's lives?

(long pause, then resentfully) "Well, you have to be like a wife...Like if you're not married you've got no-one else to come home and cook and wash for."

.....

Q : I'm trying to work out why women tend to do that.

"I don't know why; if a man can do it, he should do it for himself."

Q : But they don't, do they?

"Lots of women let men take advantage of them."

Q: I wonder why that is.

{very long pause, then resentfully} "Most of them probably think {scornfully, disparagingly} women are allowed to be women and men have to be men. Like girls aren't allowed to play football, or women can't do engineering 'cos it's a man's job, cleaning is a woman's job."

Q: So why do they say these things?

{long pause} "Perhaps they're afraid of something, aren't they?"

Q: What of, do you think?

"It might turn out they have more experience than men."

.....

Q: Why do men not want to do jobs like cleaning?

{very long pause, no response}

Q: Why do they say that's a woman's job?

"Because they don't want to learn it."

When pressed, Michelle reveals her sharp resentment and her insight into patriarchal relations; but when, at the end, she is asked whether, in view of her own evident opposition to normative expectations of domestic division of labour, she would be herself prepared to 'be like a wife', she fell into a subdued tone and replied, very simply, "yes, I would."

#### 4.2.4 *Non-transforming resolutions*

##### Cultural apprenticeship

###### Summary definition

Critically reflexive but 'constrained' consciousness, encapsulated in the principle of 'separate and equal'. Positive acceptance of class-based community tradition entails subordination or submerging of gender divisions in favour of class solidarity in production; positive valuation of femininity permits critical consciousness of gender divisions in reproduction; the ideological separation of female/male worlds and class solidarity hinders the extension of critical consciousness to production/reproduction relations. In this study, girls from old-established indigenous skilled/entrepreneurial working-class communities occupy this location, which essentially reproduces a cultural fraction currently subject to long-term attrition as a consequence of economic and social change.

##### Case 3/2 : Kelly : Wilhelma School

Kelly is full of confidence that she will attain her aspiration to become a hairdresser; she's already found out about the training requirements and has started making concrete plans - ultimately she wants to have her own salon. She can think of nothing that will stop her - she has a mind of her own and plenty of determination, she feels.

In contrast, Kelly has a rather low opinion of Wilhelma girls. They are inclined not to put in any effort at school or in planning their futures, so they'll end up on the dole. However, she has only recently moved to the school, following her parents' move from another locality to take on a pub tenancy. She misses her old school and her friends quite a lot, finding Wilhelma noisier and more ill-disciplined. Kelly intends to sit O-levels; her option choices prioritise gender and market vocational subjects.\*

Kelly is the much-treasured baby in a family of five, all of whom have done relatively well for themselves - two toolmakers, one commercial artist, and a married sister who is a bank cashier. Her parents have always been jointly involved in small-scale commercial self-employment - running cafes, shops, etc. - but not of an 'inheritable' or highly prosperous kind. They have strongly encouraged their children to secure 16+ exam qualifications and vocational training; their own experiences have taught Kelly that you have to be prepared to be flexible if you want to escape unemployment. Her mother is pleased that Kelly wants to be a hairdresser, her own frustrated aspiration, pointing out that it's the kind of job you can do from home when you have children. Her mother has always regretted that she didn't fulfill her hopes: in those days "when you did hairdressing you got £1.50, but in a factory you got £2.50 - and my nan made her go to the factory, 'cos in those days it was very poor and my nan needed the money for housekeeping." Kelly recalls wanting to be a nurse when she was little (to help people, the standard sample response), but that since going off it (after her dog was run over!) hairdressing has always occupied her thoughts. She's very well-informed about it, so much so that she literally forgot to have a word with the careers teacher at the recent option choice evening. Kelly favours the salon apprenticeship route rather than going on a college training course, because "if you go to a hairdresser to try to get a job and they ask you where you've been, if you say you've been to college they'll say you've not had much experience on hair, but if you've been at a hairdresser's they'll think you've [more experience], so you've got more chance of getting a job." She also has an entrepreneurial eye: "If you look along a parade of shops, you'll see there's quite a few hairdressers that have opened up, new ones, which shows hairdressing is a good business to go into."

Kelly does not seek to question gender divisions in production, a world she sees as split into clearly sex-typed task areas based on the fact that it is men who "discovered" everything except nursing; if women are not found in certain sectors, it is because they are, as females, incompetent for the task or because they lack determination. However, men are equally inappropriate for women's jobs - like hairdressing, where only men with dubious gender identities would consider it. Kelly's consciousness of her own social location in class terms is definitive: she used the opportunity to name role models to state she'd like the impossible - to be like the Queen, who has everything and is paid for doing nothing: "It just isn't fair! She does much less than we do." Realistically, a job in a bank, like her sister has, brings you the desirable status of a trusted person - but it's not a job you can do if you have children. Kelly's ideal future would contain "a big mansion with two guard dogs, a rich husband and a hairdresser's of my own. I said to my Dad when he's earned enough money with the pub he can buy me a hairdresser's when I leave school. He said he'd buy me two!"

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\* History, business studies, biology, child development and cookery. Kelly simply likes history, which her mother finds inexplicable on the basis that no-one in the family until now felt especially drawn to it. Taking biology means, at Wilhelma, that she is doing quite well in her schoolwork and has chosen the gender-appropriate science. Again, business studies is a labour market insurance policy measure.



#### 4.2.5 *Intersections between gender, ethnicity and class*

I want to raise two issues in this brief discussion, which mainly refers back to the preceding case studies. Firstly, I want to highlight the significance of the minority girls in the sample, though their numbers were few and their ethnic backgrounds disparate. Of the ten girls in question, three were allocated to potentially transforming gender locations (marginality, codebending) and four to the 'stronger' transitional location of struggle. Ethnicity intersects with gender and class in complex ways which this study is in no position to explore, but we can offer some reflections on how these girls are similar to and different from 'white indigenous' girls in the sample. The second issue focuses on intersections between gender and class, and reflects on the different situations of working class and middle class girls who are located respectively in marginality and in codebending, i.e. in potentially transforming locations.

At some levels, we can see that specific family, schooling and personal circumstances contribute to all girls' situations in similar ways, regardless of ethnic origin. Frances' (1/25, see pp.147-9) favourable situation, as the daughter of achieved professional parents attending Sternrise and placed in a rather special first-year A-stream class, would arguably be much the same whatever her ethnicity. If anything, given her 'individualised cosmopolitanism', Frances has access to additional positive resources for negotiating gendered transitions 'successfully.' Donna (3/28, p.140), who also goes to Sternrise but is in the B-stream, is positioned much less favourably in the first place. Her mother is a single parent living on social security; Donna herself has problems at school. She neither feels at home there, nor does she do well in her schoolwork.

At other levels, the more complex and the culturally specific ways in which gender,

ethnicity and class intersect in the lives of minority group girls give them differently structured options. As the daughter of Turkish parents who has lived in England since she was six, Ayesha's (3/27) situation is quite different from that of Michelle (1/13, pp.153-5), whose parents came to the UK from Jamaica. Michelle herself has never been there, and her cultural identity is firmly British (but not simply 'assimilated'). Ayesha's situation is no more similar to that of Nadia (3/20, pp.144-5), either. Her Turkish Cypriot father came to the UK as a young man, but her parents divorced when she was very small. The four children identify wholly with their London-born mother and her kinship network, embedded in a traditional working class community. Ayesha, however, is a classic case of second generation intercultural conflict. Her parents are carefully reasonable in their attempts to preserve tradition, and Ayesha was quite clear what this meant in terms of the regulation of her aspirations and her social behaviour. She was relying on the strategy of extended education to avoid an otherwise early marriage.

The 'double negative' of female gender and minority status does not, *in itself*, turn into a positive resource. But specific intersections between the two may mean that structured contradictions are more sharply manifested in girls' experiences. Given favourable circumstances, some may then be able to push harder and longer at resisting immediately accommodative resolutions. In doing so, they contribute disproportionately to shifting the terms of gender relations towards transformation rather than reproduction. However, circumstances are not necessarily favourable and other specific intersections may simply intensify the difficulties such girls face.

But in important ways, the situations of *some* indigenous and *some* minority girls are similar. Aileen (1/1, pp.138-9), Donna (3/28), Emily (1/28, pp.141-2) and Jessica (3/16) all have actually or potentially fractured and distanced relations to schooling. Their points of gravity lie outside school, where they receive more positive affirm-

ation and do not feel under pressure. Under such circumstances, given little self-confidence in their own talents and potential, it is difficult to see how these girls can begin to reflect critically upon gender divisions - unless they receive a considerable degree of support in a context they can trust. The culture of femininity and, later, family-centred caring roles are viable channels through to adulthood and a sense of self-worth. In the same way, Eleanor (3/10, pp.142-3), Nadia (3/20), Jane (1/21, pp.145-6) and Frances (1/25) share a number of important features. They are all doing well at school. This means, *inter alia*, that they can acquire an element of self-identity which is not automatically a function of their gender. All four girls subscribe to meritocratic individualism as a moral and personal principle; all four can draw on background resources to support and legitimate their orientation towards educational/occupational achievement. Jane and Frances both have fathers who have worked their way through to professional level qualifications and career success; they both have mothers who are primary schoolteachers. They enjoy the material and social benefits of a middle-class status which their parents see as having been fairly earned. Their daughters' task is to reproduce (at least) that status.

Eleanor and Nadia both have mothers who are strongly committed to their daughters' upward social mobility into professional status. In different ways, their mothers feel that they did not reach their own potential, and that it has been marriage and their positioning with the family which have played some part in the shortfall. This is not the case for Jane's and Frances' mothers. Girls like Eleanor and Nadia have a particular set of resources, too. Their mothers grew up working class (in the sixties) but they did not 'break through' educationally and occupationally into the achieved middle classes. Nadia's comment that 'every mum wants her kids to do better than she's done' is typical here.

But what of the position for girls whose mothers *did* break through to achieved

professional status? Here, the question of unfulfilled potential gradually recedes in the face of having to make decisions between other alternatives. Such women may well feel anger and regret at the cost to their personal autonomy and career chances of becoming wives and mothers, but they have *little real choice*. Husbands in these class fractions will almost always have higher-level and better-paying jobs than their wives, especially after children. Their daughters, then, will almost always be growing up in families where *both* vertical *and* horizontal segregation between the sexes is expressed directly in their parents' relational positions at work and at home. Both Jane's and Frances' parents are classic examples. Neither of Jane's parents went to university, though her mother is a college-trained primary teacher. Her father, however, has worked his way up to being an advertising sales manager for a large firm in central London; Jane reports that he is in a position to "boss people around," which he likes. Her mother, of course, is not in that position, and the first thing Jane comments upon is that her job is tiring. Frances' mother, also a primary teacher, was the main family breadwinner for many years, whilst her husband gradually clawed his way through to professional accountancy. As soon as he was able to provide a decent income, they had their second child and she gave up her job in an inner-city school, which she had found draining. Frances' comments about married women's employment show that she has interpreted this chain of events in conventional terms: wives take employment only when their husbands cannot earn enough to support the family.

### 4.3 *The gender locations as pattern types*

The case studies in the preceding section described discrete gender locations as individual lived experience. Here, I want to bring out economically the similarities and contrasts between these gender locations (as these arose from the analysis of all the girls' interviews). Rather than discussing each location separately for each feature, it is generally more useful to highlight the features of the major groupings of gender locations which arise from the semantic marker analysis. These groupings are: non-transforming positions (preconsciousness, fatalism), potentially transforming positions (marginality, codebending), transitional locations (avoidance, struggle) and the non-transforming resolution of cultural apprenticeship. For convenience of exposition, these four groupings of gender locations are referred to as 'sectors' in the ensuing discussion. The characteristics of these sectors are not always dealt with in the same order, however. This is because the patterns of similarities and differences between and across sectors do not necessarily place them against each other in the same fashion for each of the semantic marker features. At the same time, differences between specific gender locations (i.e. within-sector contrasts and highlights) are brought out as and when appropriate. (Cultural apprenticeship is not, of course, regarded as representative of all non-transforming resolutions, but rather stands only for itself.) Grouping gender locations into sectors hence moves the discussion to a higher level of abstraction. The discussion is further ordered into sub-sections, using the thematic categories established earlier, i.e. social origins, cultural resources, understandings and realisations (see here p. 133 for the full list of semantic markers which make up these categories). This section therefore presents the condensed results of the final step in the analysis process described earlier (on p.136).

#### 4.3.1 *Social origins and locations*

In Chapter 3 we looked at the patterns of parents' employment and occupation (as a guide to social class/community fraction placement). Although most of the girls in the study would be described as 'working class', they belong to different class fractions and kinds of communities. These internal differentiations are associated with girls' distribution across gender locations.

Firstly, girls in non-transforming positions and in (the non-transforming resolution of) cultural apprenticeship make different sorts of statements about their attachment to kin, to the local community and to its culture. The girls in non-transforming positions are certainly attached to their local community culture, but they do not 'recognise' this in an active sense. For girls located in cultural apprenticeship, such attachment is not only actively recognised but also highly salient and positively valued. They talk about their communities eagerly and enthusiastically, are full of anecdotes and examples. Girls in both of these sectors are affectively kin-focussed, and for those in non-transforming positions this is a 'fact of life'. For girls in cultural apprenticeship, however, the kin-based social network is something to be actively created and maintained, and in which the existence of a separate women's world is positively experienced.

Neither group of girls in these two sectors generally ever want to move away from their neighbourhoods, but for the girls in non-transforming positions, fracturing or disintegration of affective and social networks is common (through residential mobility, family break-up, etc.). Similarly, their academic and social engagement with schooling tends to weakness and fracture. Such girls tend to come from more disadvantaged working class fractions, where parents (and relatives) are employed in low-skill manual/casual and service jobs, and where parents, older siblings or other

kin may be unemployed. In contrast, the parents and relatives of girls located in cultural apprenticeship are likely to be (self-)employed in craft/guild trades (or their lower-skill [and gender-differentiated] associates, e.g. machinist/tailor). Such families are members of established social and occupational class cultures they would like to preserve, but in the communities they live in, economic decline has disrupted and dislocated their survival and intergenerational occupational inheritance patterns.

Girls in transitional locations and in potentially transforming positions are not clearly distinguishable from each other in the kinds of ways discussed above, but they are different from the girls in the first two sectors (i.e. non-transforming positions and cultural apprenticeship). Both these groups (i.e. transitional locations and potentially transforming positions) view their local communities positively, but they do not display an intense affective attachment to them. They are willing to consider (or expressly like) the idea of moving elsewhere to live or work in the future. In short, these girls have a more individually autonomous relation to locality. Frequently, these girls will have had experience of living elsewhere and of travel abroad; this certainly is the case for the minority girls in these two sectors (seven of the ten such girls in the sample). As we would expect, girls in transitional locations come from a variety of class fraction backgrounds. By definition, the two potentially transforming locations of marginality and codebending differ from each other on this count. Girls located in marginality are likely to come from families in which there are cross pressures of various kinds and where there is a strong orientation towards upward social mobility. Those girls located in codebending come from the achieved professional fraction of the middle class. In state comprehensive schools with different intake profiles than those in this study, we might find a wider range of social origins represented in codebending as a gender location. The representation of pupils from middle-class families educated in state schools is, however, highly

selective. Virtually all children of working class origin are in the state education system, but significant fractions of the middle class send their children to private schools. It can be argued that it is parents belonging to the achieved professional fraction who are most likely to avail themselves of state provision.

We can now see why gender location is correlated with the schools attended by the girls in this sample. Wilhelma, Dame's Trust and Sternrise serve different kinds of communities, as we saw in Chapter 3. For this reason, *and* because of their different images and realities as educational environments, they attract different kinds of pupil populations. Gender location at any one time represents the ways in which girls are meeting and negotiating the social worlds in which they find themselves. Gender location is thus associated with social origin as marked, for example, by parental employment and occupation. It is further associated with educational experience as marked, for example, by a school's philosophy and practices. By the time girls transfer to secondary schooling at 11-plus, primary and secondary habitus contexts have already become inextricably intertwined. In simple terms, Wilhelma girls were overrepresented amongst those allocated to non-transforming positions. Sternrise girls were overrepresented amongst those allocated to potentially transforming positions. Dame's Trust girls were more evenly spread through the four sectors. We shall return to this question again in Chapter 6, when we look specifically at girls' transition biographies.

#### 4.3.2 *Resources and role models*

In this sub-section we consider girls' accounts of the role and significance of parents, kin and teachers or others in providing models, support, guidance and information about educational and occupational choices and decisions. Their accounts are, of course, constructed in the context of what they know about the requirements and



access routes available for their current aspirations.

The clearest differences in girls' orientations towards role models show up when we compare non-transforming with potentially transforming positions. Girls in the former group are inclined not to be able to give the name of anyone they particularly like, respect or admire at all. When they do so, they mention kin, and only for their personal qualities. Girls in the latter group tend to respond in the first instance by specifically rejecting the idea that they might model their own aspirations and orientations on others at all. If and when such girls do then mention role models, these are equally as likely to be non-kin (especially teachers) as they are to be kin. Their reasons are equally as likely to refer to educational or occupational positions and status as to personal qualities.

Neither first nor third year girls know a great deal about how to go about attaining their aspirations, whatever their gender location. But girls' ideas about how to find out and whom to ask for advice and assistance do vary by gender location. Girls in potentially transforming positions draw on *both* family *and* school in this context, and they do so in an active manner. They describe parents and teachers as useful sources of advice, but not as directive. Rather, in these girls' eyes parents and teachers encourage and assist in informed decisionmaking based on 'free choice'. It is these girls, and only these girls, who make *active* use of the school and teachers as resources for both educational and vocational information and advice. Both they and their parents appear in the girls' accounts as *autonomous educational clients*.

In contrast, girls located in cultural apprenticeship rely heavily on kin for advice and information. The school and teachers are of only minor significance, and where their input is sought, it is for *educational rather than for vocational* purposes. These girls, and their kin, value family-community traditions even where these are no longer

occupationally transferable in a direct sense. Their parents tend to steer their daughters overtly into and along occupational pathways regarded as appropriate *both* in terms of labour market chances *and* in terms of class cultural/family tradition. These girls do not regard their parents' 'interventionist' stance as problematic; rather, they view it positively, precisely because it is their kin who will actively help them to make a 'successful' transition to adulthood. In comparison, one of the characteristic difficulties girls in transitional locations can face is a *surfeit* of peer influence and parental preference, which forms part of a tension field around educational achievement and its meanings (Miriam [3/15], discussed in Chapter 6, is an example).

The accounts of those girls in non-transforming positions, however, suggest they have few resources for advice and information either at home or at school. Parents may exert influence to steer their daughters away from 'unsuitable' aspirations - generally because they are in some way 'not good enough', occasionally explicitly because they are gender-inappropriate - but they do *not* appear as *positively supporting* daughters' decisions and aspirations (whatever these may be). Where girls include the school and teachers as actual or potential resources, they do so within a framework of *dependency*.

#### 4.3.3 *Understandings of the social world*

Two of the semantic markers within this thematic category play a particular role in describing the features of gender locations. These are, firstly, the 'division of labour by sex' (a key discriminator) and secondly, the summative marker 'gender divisions awareness'. They are therefore each discussed below as separate sub-themes. First, we give some consideration to the remaining two markers in this category : 'felt constraints' and 'perceptions of the labour market.'

Girls in non-transforming positions may sense constraints, but they do not generally voice these directly in the course of discussion, although they certainly know and say that jobs (of any kind) are not necessarily easy to come by these days. Girls in transitional locations are, by definition, acutely caught between constraints and tensions of various kinds, which they may not readily voice (as in avoidance). Girls in potentially transforming positions talk about constraints in the abstract, as potential obstacles that people may face in securing what they want from their lives. The important feature is that such girls do not see themselves as affected by such obstacles, now or in the future. It is *other* people who may experience constraints, especially those who do not possess the confidence and determination that they themselves do.

For those girls in cultural apprenticeship, constraints comprise obstacles to their successful transition to adult life within their own, valued community context. The sharpest obstacle is the state of the local economy, a more specific perspective than the simple concern about unemployment. In the mid-eighties, the problem of (youth) unemployment could hardly fail to be universally recognised; but it is only those girls located in cultural apprenticeship for whom unemployment is *embedded* in a specific social context rather than being either an uncontrollable or self-inflicted twist of fate. These girls are better informed on such matters than all others. Older girls' knowledge of the local labour market is on the whole more sophisticated than that of the younger girls, as we might reasonably have supposed, but that increased knowledge is relative to (differing) starting-points.

Girls in transitional locations and in potentially transforming positions both see the labour market in terms of the *status* of local opportunities vis-a-vis those available elsewhere. Low-status jobs mean semi-professional level occupations or below, and

the local labour market is characterised by such low-status jobs. When such girls evaluate opportunity structures, they *begin* by talking about intrinsic features of jobs and about the level of entry qualifications different kinds of jobs demand. The number of jobs available locally or elsewhere is not their first concern. Girls located in cultural apprenticeship take a different view of 'status' altogether. They recognise the hegemonic hierarchy of statuses, but they do not subscribe to it for themselves. Rather, these girls have access to an alternative set of positive social meanings, linked to their community.

#### 4.3.3.1 *The division of labour by sex in production and reproduction*

The gender locations are all distinctive in the ways girls think about the social division of labour by sex. Girls' understandings differ in how they see the division of labour in the family/household and in the labour market as distinct spheres. They also understand the *connections* between the division of labour in the two spheres in different ways. When girls consider the conventional patterns of the gendered division of labour in the world around them, they have the opportunity to decide to which elements they will accommodate and those on which they are presently unwilling to compromise. Their projected strategies of both 'escape' and accommodation differ accordingly.

Girls in both non-transforming positions certainly recognise the existence of a gendered division of labour in production and in reproduction. They accept those divisions uncritically, and they turn exclusively to essentialist explanations of sex differences in character and competences to account for these. Girls located in 'preconsciousness', however, are more certain about the nature of the division of labour by sex *in the family*, more confident about its 'naturalness', than they are about what happens in employment. In other words, they are inclined to be

indecisive about whether women and men have different kinds of jobs unless they are prompted with concrete examples of stereotypical male or female typed occupations. They affirm these divisions, as if they are so much part of the taken for granted that one does not consciously think about them unless prompted to do so, and then explain the divisions by reference to physical strength differences and cleanliness/dirtiness of the work.

If we interpret 'preconsciousness' as a starting position for everyone at some point, then the indecisiveness and the distance from the world of employment are explicable, especially if we remember that by the age of 11/12, girls from particularly disadvantaged backgrounds cluster in non-transforming positions. 'Fatalism' might then be interpreted as a more sharply contoured and worked-through non-transforming position, encapsulated in the principle 'separate and unequal.' The gendered division of labour in production and reproduction is recognised and accepted as an unremarkable aspect of the social world. For girls located in non-transforming positions, then, 'escape' is not the salient question.

Girls in the transitional sector all recognise quite clearly the natures of the division of labour by sex both in the family and at work. Girls located in 'avoidance' are inclined not to link the patterns together very clearly, and they tend to resort to deficit models to explain women's position in general. Nevertheless, resentment about the situation is not far below the surface once girls have an opportunity to begin to voice this. Girls located in 'struggle' are more sharply and overtly aware of all these issues, searching more widely for acceptable explanations. They are still inclined to take a critical stance towards 'femininity'. In other words : people choose the jobs they want to do regardless of their gender, but (other) girls have the irritating inclination to choose 'feminine' jobs with low pay and status. The problem that stubbornly remains, of course, is that of what happens about the housework and, especially, the

children, i.e. how to find and realise an alternative division of labour between wives and husbands. Girls in both transitional locations, though, subscribe in principle to the 'escape' route of (relatively speaking) higher-status and (hence, they think) less strongly gendered occupations. Marriage and early motherhood is pushed away into the far future or simply rejected (although no alternative scenarios are to hand).

Girls in both potentially transforming positions see most clearly of all that the gendered divisions of labour in the family and in employment are interconnected, and they too identify the solution as securing entry to professional level occupations. These girls firmly subscribe to the idea of meritocratic individualism, where personal talent and effort leads to success and satisfaction in life. They say that they are not willing to sacrifice success and satisfaction in their worklives (and *careers*) to family responsibilities as these are conventionally understood to apply to women.

Here the features of the two positions begin to diverge. The working class girls located in 'marginality' are particularly inclined to blame women for their lack of confidence in venturing beyond traditionally female interests and occupations. They also are more likely to propose that the way to deal with gender inequalities in the family division of labour is not to have children (rather than not to marry), whereas the middle class girls located in 'codebending' want to delay (but not reject) marriage and motherhood. At the same time, these middle class girls *both* acknowledge prejudice and discrimination against women workers *and* emphasise that children need their mothers. This is where potentially transforming positions move towards the widely practised 'Superwoman' resolution, humanly unreasonable though it may be.

The interesting feature of 'cultural apprenticeship' is the clearheadedness of such girls' understandings of the gendered division of labour in both the family and at

work, combined with a certain resistance to acknowledging that there is a critical linkage between the two. I think this resistance is associated with (at least) three factors : the separateness of female/male worlds, a positive valuation of femininity, and class solidarity. It is *men's* disadvantage on the labour market that these girls emphasise, not women's. If women have problems here, it is their own fault, for example, if women find it difficult to get a job in a 'man's' trade or to put up with a male-dominated work environment. At the same time, that the domestic division of labour is unfavourable to women as opposed to men is undisputed, but men are simply incompetent in the house and with children.

#### 4.3.3.2 *Awareness and consciousness of gender divisions*

Broadly speaking, for girls located in non-transforming positions and in cultural apprenticeship, class divisions are relatively more salient than are gender divisions, but for different reasons. For the former, critical questioning of gender divisions simply does not gain momentum. Class divisions, howsoever understood, are more highly profiled than are gender and race/ethnic divisions in the collective understandings of societies like our own (and in that of sociologists). It takes a particular effort to overcome accustomed worldviews; but certainly for the girls in this sample, class divisions have a very real meaning, most acutely for those located in non-transforming positions. They may not have (yet) developed a class consciousness in the sense sociologists use this term, but the conditions of their lives mean that housing, jobs, and creating the basis for satisfying private and family lives are of immediate, continuing concern. Those girls located in 'cultural apprenticeship', however, have a positive attachment to established community class culture with its own specific understandings of priorities and concerns. Gender divisions occupy a place, but not the prime place, in a cultural tradition which is fundamentally male-dominated despite its 'separate and equal' maxim. For girls in non-transforming

positions, gender divisions do not occupy much of a place at all : the sexes are rather 'separate and *unequal*.'

In contrast, for girls in transitional locations and in potentially transforming positions, gender divisions are at least as salient as either class or race/ethnic divisions. (Although this does not mean that any are highly salient in the girls' thinking. They might not be seen as very important at all in shaping opportunities and ways of life.) The transitional locations represent more openly (in 'struggle') and less openly (in 'avoidance') the struggles and tensions consequent upon consciousness of multiple structured inequalities, all of which may compete for awareness and attention. It is, of course, exactly the recognition of inconsistencies and contradictions of experience and expectations by an active subject that *generates* dynamic struggle within a discourse.

Those girls located in potentially transforming positions have found, or are provided with, a way through the jungle : meritocratic individualism, a means of understanding the social world and subject positions in which structured systems of social inequalities are no longer accorded an important role in shaping group and individual potentialities and constraints. This need not be the only 'escape route' from the contradictions girls and women inevitably face in a social formation which is indeed structured by, *inter alia*, gender inequality. But it remains the *socially legitimated* escape route, whether at school or on the labour market, and it is an ideological mechanism which prevents potential transforming resolutions taking long-term shape for many girls and women. If these girls do not achieve their hopes and aspirations, whatever these may be, they will think it not due to their gender, but because they are 'objectively not good enough', because they have 'failed' in some way.



By definition, 'preconsciousness' implies that neither gender *nor any other* socially structured divisions are systematically or clearly integrated into a conscious awareness. At least, if that conscious awareness is present, it was not being voiced. There might be a number of reasons for this, but certainly one will be the quality of girls' educational experience. 'Fatalism', however, implies that gender divisions are uncritically accepted as facts of life, subsumed into a worldview in which pattern descriptions are androcentric, and women are subordinate and deficient.

Transitional locations are inherently tentative and interim. They combine awareness of gender divisions with hesitant and variable reflection and critique, implying that girls are subject to sharply conflicting messages. This will be true for most girls at some point in their trajectories, but the intensity of such conflicts varies across space and time : how girls are placed vis-a-vis ethnicity/race and class, how their experience of schooling unfolds, and in which specific cultural contexts they grow up. In the case of 'cultural apprenticeship', for example, conscious awareness of gender divisions exists in such a way that these cannot be wholly questioned. The potential 'danger' of the positive valuation of femininity for the reproduction of patriarchal relations is held in check by the production/reproduction split demanded by class solidarity. Male domination can only be acknowledged (if indeed) in the family-household. Were this also possible (i.e. *legitimated*) for production, transforming potential would be released, since the principle of meritocratic *individualism* is not (yet?) part of these girls' cultural tradition.

In other words, girls located in cultural apprenticeship do have a partially autonomous relation to the terms of gender discourse, embedded within a specific economic and local cultural community context. The girls in potentially transforming positions also have a partially autonomous relation to the terms of gender discourse, but theirs is differently structured. The substantive focus of this study lies

in the patterns of maintenance/disintegration of occupational segregation by sex through youth transitions. The only *legitimated* mechanism of breakdown occurs through (relatively) high aspirations and educational achievement. This channel holds a 'danger' for the social reproduction of gender relations: it is *both* legitimated *and* potentially questions that legitimation. Gender divisions in reproduction, in particular ideologies of mothering, remain one crucial check on the resulting tension. Mothering ideologies can work particularly effectively for middle class fractions, where many women could in theory finance good childcare from their own earnings (or from *family* income) but where their employment is not absolutely financially necessary to the family (though it is increasingly becoming so). Working class conditions of life mean that wives' and mothers' employment has been in practice unremarkable and accepted. Class-based inequalities in educational outcome mean there are still few working-class girls in a position to follow the legitimated route through to those sectors of the labour market which are not *necessarily* so strongly gendered - at least at first glance. Marginality and codebending are class-associated gender locations, and the girls who populate them are therefore differentially constrained (and enabled). This difference is reflected in their occupational aspirations, to which we now turn.

#### 4.3.4 Educational-occupational realisations

This discussion is restricted to considering the general nature of girls' past and current aspirations as these were given in interview. (A closer analysis of the aspirations girls actually name is undertaken in Chapter 5.) The range of girls' voiced aspirations is indisputably narrow, at least in the *first* instance, so differences between girls will always be subtle in character.

Girls in non-transforming positions report the *fewest number* of past aspirations.

These girls are those who are most likely to say that they cannot remember ever having had specific occupational aspirations, or that they have always wanted to be what they now want to be. However, girls located in cultural apprenticeship are actively reflective about their aspiration biographies through to the present, and they recognise the role of family expectations and traditions in shaping these. The *current* aspirations of both those girls in non-transforming positions and in cultural apprenticeship are classically and uniformly gendered : nurse, secretary, hair-dresser, model, shop assistant, seamstress; but also simply working with children, animals, old people or in a cafe.

Girls allocated to transitional locations report a *greater number and wider range* of past aspirations (relative to those of other girls). This means that they were more likely to include so-called unusual or exciting jobs, or that they more often mentioned less strongly 'gender-appropriate choices' : air hostess, pop singer, the foreign exchange, policewoman, scientist, professional footballer, electrician. These girls did not always tell us about these ideas until further on in the conversation. It is possible that they did so when they felt we were neither judging them nor were we official careers advisors, with whom one has to be 'realistic.' Again, I suspect that the trends towards less 'conventional and realistic' choices are associated with minority status (though not exclusively so).

The girls in potentially transforming positions also reported having had a number of past choices, but their range of current choices was differently accented. All these girls tended towards professional level aspirations. But the choices of the middle class girls (in codebending) are more narrowly spread than are those of the working class girls (in marginality). The 'codebenders' wanted to be journalists, lawyers, dancers in musicals, actresses, teachers; the 'marginals' wanted to be archaeologists, machine mechanics, laboratory scientists, and pilots as well. We could propose that

these patterns, diffuse as they are, suggest that the intersections between gender and class do produce differently structured conflicts, negotiations and accommodations. We pointed out earlier, in considering the division of labour by sex, that girls have (repeated) opportunities to decide to which elements they will accommodate and which they will resist. These opportunities are manifested, however, in the light of the social worlds in which they live. Both the data from this study and the literature surveyed in earlier chapters imply that there are differences between the ways middle class and working class women are positioned in relation to gender discourse; here, it seems that occupational choices themselves *may* be influenced accordingly. To consider this more explicitly, we need further research.

The directions taken by girls' transitions are, finally, embedded in their schooling experiences. Once more, the girls' relation to education acts as a feature of gender locations. Those in non-transforming positions tend to display an *uncomfortable uneasiness* with schooling, marked by 'poorish' achievement levels and distance (rather than necessarily overt disaffection). The general felt monotony of educational experience is relieved only by subjects which are taught through practical activities which can be directly connected with leisure pastimes or 'gender vocational' themes. (3) Those girls located in cultural apprenticeship also have a distanced relationship to schooling. (4) The distance here arises from the fact that *formal education/training is not seen as the necessary key to attaining aspirations*. This does not mean such girls do not recognise the need for talent and competence, but that they do not see acquisition channels as primarily located in education. So these girls do not value 'academic' subjects highly; they prefer vocational subjects, and they would expect girls and boys to have different interests and choices (in a *positive* sense). Schooling for girls located transitionally can be implicated in the problems with which they are juggling, for example, in deciding between the relative salience of 'market vocational' versus 'academic' subjects; between expectations and realities

of achievement levels; or between the gender-appropriateness of and personal interest in a subject area. Vivienne (3/23; see Ch. 6), for example, chose to take CDT as one of her options, partly because she was genuinely interested in practical/technical crafts, and partly as a sign of resistance *both* to what she termed the “la-di-da” femininity of Sternrise A-stream girls *and* to her “know-it-all” community worker stepfather. Vivienne did not want to accommodate to middle class femininity or schooling values (as she saw them), but at the same time she desperately wanted to do well at school - on her own terms.

It is no surprise to find that girls located in potentially transforming positions are usually doing relatively well at school, both academically and socially; certainly they are themselves happy with how they are doing. Where difficulties arise, they voice and reflect on these in a typically confident and somewhat detached manner. These girls favour academic subjects rather than practical or vocational ones, which they see as ‘soft’ choices. This does not mean that girls who are educationally ‘successful’ have acquired a potentially transformatory stance towards gender discourse as a result of their positive engagement with what schooling has to offer. It simply means that educational success, which points the way towards extended educational participation, acts as *a form of protection* against the outcomes of gender-specific educational-occupational transitions, outcomes to which girls who leave at 16+ are exposed and highly vulnerable.

#### 4.4 *Gender divisions and emancipatory change*

We have now examined gender locations in some detail, both through case studies and as pattern types. To complete this chapter's discussion, I want to draw out how girls' worldviews inform their approaches to stability and change in gender relations. Reflection upon how the girls described and explained the division of labour

by sex affords some insight into how gender discourse structures their range of 'sense-making' options and the means by which they might construct and pursue alternatives. Those familiar with what girls in early adolescence have to say about sex roles at home and at work would find what the girls in this study had to say unremarkably typical. In other words, it would be a simple task to arrange their accounts into a consistent, reasonably homogenous picture, and indeed, there is considerable common ground across the whole sample. Equally, there are subtle differences, which raise questions about the relationship of feminism to contemporary social change.

All girls can describe patterns of horizontal occupational segregation by sex. Their descriptions are broadly accurate, especially where the examples are drawn primarily from those sectors of the labour market with which they are most familiar, i.e. the kinds of jobs represented in their affective and social networks and in the daily round of their lives. All girls are perfectly well able to identify the paradigmatic differences between women's and men's occupational distribution. Some may qualify the picture they draw, but its form remains fundamentally the same: women and men do different jobs, and they do so because they have, or are seen to have (rightly or wrongly), gender-differentiated personalities and interests. Secondly, all girls are quite clear about the nature of the division of labour by sex in the family and household. The breadwinner/ homemaker distinction remains firmly fixed as an ideological benchmark, from which real families and personal preferences may diverge, but which is always the starting-point for reflection. Caring for and servicing of other people as a necessity of life lies at the heart of girls' perspectives, a set of tasks that they see women as more *willing* to undertake on account of their positive personal qualities. This willingness includes a willingness to *sacrifice* themselves, well expressed in Nadia's (3/20) comment that female-typed jobs are those where women "run around after" men, or are to do with caring, whereas male-

typed jobs are more exciting and "more for themselves."

It is for this reason that men are *left with* being the breadwinners, because they are neither able nor willing to undertake these centrally necessary tasks. So whilst we might speak, for some gender locations, of a deficit model of women/femininity which girls applied in considering women's employment positions and work roles, when it comes to the family a strong and universal deficit model of men/masculinity underlies all girls' understandings. Only those (few) girls in this study whose parents belong to the achieved middle class explicitly remark upon men's increasing participation in housework and childcare in the context of describing what they judge as a gradual general breakdown in traditional sex roles. (5) Amy (1/26) best expresses this point of view, but her parents are both full-time teachers and she has one very young sibling, into whose care and upbringing she herself has been fully drawn. The way Amy reports her parents' domestic division of labour is indicative of its atypicality in the very moment that she presents it as evidence of egalitarian relations.

Ever since my little sister was born my dad has shared looking after her. He takes her up for a bath at 5.30pm, while my mum makes us something to eat. Or my dad will cook. Whoever hasn't cooked washes up, or I do, and the other two play with my sister, or read her something. So we all share everything, and at weekends the same with the housework too.....There aren't many people we know who share like us. Sometimes my dad does much more than my mum in the evenings if she comes home tired, or the other way round. The only thing he can't do is the shopping, he always buys all the wrong things, so sometimes my mum does it or we all go together on Friday evenings. My mum has arthritis in her hand, so my dad does all the ironing now. When people we know come, or the neighbours, they make funny comments, like he's under my mum's thumb or who's wearing the trousers and so on! (1/26, 1984)

I include Amy's account simply because it is so unusual for the girls in this study, and yet it continues to take cognisance of very basic parameters of gender discourse. A comparison with Bridget's hilarious account of what happens in her house is

instructive. Bridget, located squarely in cultural apprenticeship, described how her mother would quite like to give up her part-time job (though she'd always had paid work and was still employed when we last spoke to Bridget in 1986) as she's on the go from morning to night "without a sit-down". Her father

washes up on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays when we've had a big tea, it's normally roast dinner, and afterwards he makes my mum a cup of tea - but I don't like his tea, it's too strong.....He brings her tea in bed [sometimes]....When she weren't well he did a lot for her, he went to the shops and did the housework and the dinners for her.....He does a lot my dad. He's not a handyman, he can't bang a nail in the wall.....My mum does that! (1/3, 1984)

Bridget goes on to remark that the trouble with men is that they don't really want to do the housework after they've been at work all day, and if their wives insist, they're inclined to escape back down to the pub. In any case, women are more fastidious than men are. In her elder brother's family, she comments, he takes their toddler out for a walk whilst his wife does the housework, whereas she will look after the child when he is doing a bit of decorating. But Bridget's brother and his friend didn't manage to change their respective babies' nappies successfully on the one occasion when their wives left them in charge for a couple of hours. Bridget laughed at this incompetence :

They couldn't even do that!

Q : Are men good for anything much, then?

Drinking! Smoking! And sitting on their bums reading the paper! That's all they're good for at our house anyway.

Q : And what are women good at?

Everything! They try. Like my dad doesn't try - he's funny, but if he's trying to fix something and it goes wrong he screams. I just laugh at him now!

Q : What are the best things about women?

They're more caring than men. When my mum was in hospital my dad used to give me fish finger sandwiches every day for my dinner! And I was looking like a fish finger! And when my sister did the cooking, she'd ask me what I wanted - but he never even asked me! And he had to give up his job for two weeks to do it, he said to me 'It's your fault, this!' He didn't mean it, but I thought he was serious [at the time].



Q : So if men are pretty incompetent, does that mean women are in charge of things, or who is in charge?

My mum's in charge of cooking and the housework, and my dad, us - well, we're in charge of nothing! But if I want to go out to my mate's and ask my mum, she says ask your father. I don't know why. (1/3,1984)

Not all girls talk so vividly as Bridget does about the domestic division of labour in their homes, but there is little doubt that more families approximate to Bridget's parents' pattern than to Amy's. Neither do girls all talk about these topics *in the same way* as Bridget does, where the positive valuation of women and a good-natured tolerance of men's domestic failings is characteristic of the cultural apprenticeship location. Nevertheless, the way in which the breadwinner/homemaker concept is structured by girls comes over particularly well in this example. Bridget also closes her account with a reference to patterns of vertical segregation by sex in the reproduction sphere, where mothers may direct task performance but it is fathers who control persons. Amy's parents, on the other hand, retain convention through their professional ranking : her father is a primary head, her mother a primary classroom teacher.

Whereas all girls recognise horizontal segregation by sex, not all recognise vertical segregation by sex, and those who do so see it in different ways. Girls located in preconsciousness, avoidance and cultural apprenticeship do not comment upon this aspect of gender divisions very much at all. Those located in preconsciousness do not seem particularly to recognise its existence, those located in avoidance prefer not to take it into account, and for those located in cultural apprenticeship women and men importantly occupy separate hierarchies. Those located in fatalism, on the other hand, place relative emphasis upon vertical segregation in terms of men's greater power and authority, a state of affairs whose legitimacy they do not seek to question. Girls located in struggle, marginality and codebending integrate *both* dimensions

of segregation by sex into their accounts, just as they also integrate production/reproduction *relations* more clearly into their understandings of gender divisions more generally.

But how do the girls explain these gendered patterns in the division of labour? The gender locations of both marginality and codebending accept and apply explanations which essentially deny the contemporary relevance of structured social inequalities in the eradication of women's disadvantage: they emphasise equal opportunities within a framework of meritocratic individualism. Gender inequalities are banished to the irrelevant past:

Why should we learn about a peasant, people who never did anything?...Our teacher's very into that - he wants us to do more women, because he thinks women were left out of history a lot, but I would say if they didn't do anything why learn about them!...And anyway we're doing a very sexist age, when women weren't allowed to do anything - the Tudors...so if a woman had done anything, they would have written about it because it would have been so unusual...But I think it was sexist in quite a few ways that were sensible, because women in those days had more children, so if they were having children they couldn't work. (Frances, 1/25, 1984)

This means they are disinclined to politicise their insights via a *collectivist* programme for social change. They prefer to place their trust in a progressive social evolution towards gender equality coupled with an individual responsibility to realise one's own potential. Women's continued disadvantage, in this account, becomes attributable to a *de-gendered individual failure*. Similarly, the kinds of personal attributes which are recognised as gender-linked by girls in all locations (determination, courage, etc.) become de-gendered individual attributes, which are then ranked from an androcentric perspective (viz. "you have to pull girls up to boys' standards").

The responses of those girls located in preconsciousness suggests that no explanatory model for gender divisions beyond a highly concrete essentialism is available to them. Interestingly, however, in contrast to the responses of girls located in fatalism, the sense of lesser valuation of women/femininity is not present; rather, women and men simply do different things in life. For girls in both non-transforming positions, responses to these kinds of questions were marked by *fragmentation and absence* of content and interpretation as much as by what they actually said and how they understood gender divisions. These are the girls who would rarely provide 'quotable quotes', for example.

Girls located in cultural apprenticeship, in contrast, take a gynocentric view of the world, but accommodate its critical potential into class solidarity, for example through the idea of the family wage. Bridget (1/3) firmly held that men get paid more because they have more responsibilities to support their families. They are the breadwinners, and it is important that men are free to go out and earn as much as they can, rather than being hampered by having to look after the children. This was how Bridget understood her elder brother's latest wage rise, which had, she said, been given to him by his boss because his wife was expecting their second child and they needed to buy a larger house.

In the transitional locations, girls' anger and resentment at women's oppression both in the home and at work is nearest the surface: at such moments in their lives, these girls are struggling intensely to make sense of the possible explanations for this situation. Lorraine's (3/14) frustration burst out towards the end of her first interview when she said, half-resigned, half-desperate that "I don't know what to do about these problems - women could protest but we don't know if we'd get anywhere, do we. To do something you'd need all the women in the world, wouldn't you?" Here, a move towards recognition of patriarchal relations as the fundamental

problem, and collective response as the solution, takes shape on Lorraine's horizon. Vivienne's (3/23) response is more common : change is a question of "strong-minded women braving the reactions alone," as she tried to do.

But as we noted earlier, an acceptance of individualist explanatory models and solutions leads to a de-gendering of inequalities; and, in itself, this is more likely to lead to accommodatory than to transforming resolutions as far as processes of social and cultural reproduction and change are concerned. To feel that one can take one's fate into one's own hands is personally emancipatory, but it is not necessarily socially emancipatory. It also entails high risks, since not only success, but also failure, rests with oneself. Partial autonomies are purchased at some cost.

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#### Footnotes

1 It is important to ask when equivalences are no longer 'really' equivalent, of course, as in the debate over the absorption of working class girls into routine office work. On the other hand, all office jobs are not equivalent either.

2 The full versions of these defining attributes are too lengthy to include here, but they are available, as are all the episode cards.

3 By 'gender vocational' I mean those curriculum subjects, or aspects of subjects, which are related to gender-appropriate skills and roles in the reproductive sphere, classically cooking, sewing, and childcare. 'Market vocational' subjects, or aspects of subjects, are those which teach skills of direct labour market value, for girls especially typing and office studies (now under the aegis of business studies in many schools).

4 It might easily be simply termed an instrumental orientation, but in fact the majority of girls (and boys) regard schooling instrumentally in one form or another, so that the term does not carry much specific meaning.

5 I do not wish thereby to propose that it is men in this middle class fraction who are the pioneers in constructing the so-termed 'new man', though this self-styled image is certainly popular amongst the educated and liberal middle classes.

## 5 Occupational worlds and gendered futures: perspectives, aspirations and expectations

The empirical analysis began by locating the girls in this study socially and educationally and then explored their locations within gender discourse. This chapter directly examines girls' occupational aspirations and expectations. The patterns of response show that most girls are firmly positioned within their gendered, social and educational milieux. Girls do change their minds about what jobs they want and expect to have, so that these patterns chart the dynamics of the reproduction of gender relations. The findings reported in this chapter are in accord with the course of the preceding analyses, which is of particular interest, because in this chapter we turn to a larger sample and different kinds of data (which are described immediately below) together with some discussion of how the information may be interpreted. The second section examines the nature and the correlates of girls' perspectives on occupational structure through an analysis of 'spontaneous joblists'. The third section then considers girls' aspirations and expectations. The chapter closes by placing the findings in the context of cultural semantics as a component of gender discourse.

### 5.1 *The sample and the data*

The GAOC project was designed to accommodate both 'pure' research into gendered occupational choice processes and the examination of the consequences of curriculum intervention for the direction taken by those processes (see Chisholm, 1983). In each of the two schools initially taking part in both aspects of the project (Wilhelma and Dame's Trust), two forms from each of the first and third year cohorts were drawn into the study. In one first-year and one third-year form in each school, both

research and curriculum action took place. In the parallel forms, research data were collected but no direct curriculum action was undertaken. In the third school (Sternrise) no curriculum action was initiated by the GAOC project. Research data were collected in the same manner as at Wilhelma and Dame's Trust, here including one 'A' and one 'B' stream form from each of the first and third year cohorts. The 1984 interview sample was drawn randomly from the 'research-only' forms in each school (as described in Chapter 3, section 3.1). This separated the longitudinal study of occupational choice processes from the curriculum action (participation in which might have influenced interview response).

As a first and baseline data collection task, survey-type instruments were administered to all pupils in the (twelve) forms drawn into the GAOC project. Their purpose was to explore pupil perspectives on occupational structure and to obtain information about their aspirations, expectations and the occupational networks in which they were locally embedded (i.e. the jobs held by adults they knew in their family and community). These instruments are reproduced in Appendix IV. We refer to the data collected as: 'joblists'; *questionnaire* aspirations and expectations (in contrast to those given in interview); and 'networks'.

These instruments were administered (1) between two and four months prior to conducting interviews and (in the relevant schools and forms) to initiating curriculum action. They played no role in the selection of the interview sample, and their contents were not consulted before interviews were conducted (either in 1984 or subsequently). The analysis of the interview data was similarly conducted prior to and therefore independently of the analysis of the survey data used here. Furthermore, the instruments were administered in a specific order. Firstly, pupils completed joblists; secondly and independently, they completed the questionnaire asking them about aspirations, expectations and networks. The joblists were spont-

aneously elicited, and the pupils did not then know that the project was interested in gender. We told the children that we wanted to find out what young people knew and thought about jobs; and that we wanted them to give us some idea of how many different kinds of jobs they could think of, so we wanted everyone simply to write down the names of the first ten jobs that entered their head. (2) The questionnaire on aspirations, expectations and networks was administered shortly afterwards, and the pupils were still unaware that gender was the focus of the study. It is possible that some pupils may have entered among their aspirations jobs that had occurred to them during the joblist task, if they were undecided about what they wanted to be (we explore this under 5.2.1 below).

The joblists analysis draws on a sample of 169 girls from all twelve forms in the three schools. (3) The analysis of *questionnaire* aspirations and expectations which follows includes the 119 girls from the six research-only forms. The 61 (36) girls who were interviewed in 1984 (in 1984-6) are, of course, a sub-sample of these 119 girls who completed questionnaires. These 61 (36) girls provide us with *interview* aspirations and expectations, so that we can compare the two sources of data. Sample size is adequate for our purposes in this chapter. However, cell numbers become quite small when both age and school are cross-tabulated, so we should approach some of the findings cautiously.

## 5.2 *Occupational worlds*

Here we consider the joblists returned by 169 first and third year girls at Wilhelma, Dame's Trust and Sternrise schools in autumn 1984. 142 filled all ten spaces on the list as requested and in the time allotted. Most of the rest returned nine or eight entries. (4) This yields a large sample of 1503 jobs, which include a total of 212 *different*

jobs. (5) These 212 jobs are treated in this analysis as the *working universe of occupations* for a sample such as this one, i.e. urban-metropolitan girls aged 11-14 and (primarily) from working-class backgrounds.

Two questions immediately arise : firstly, what do the joblists in themselves represent; and secondly, is the sample of jobs large enough to regard as an occupational universe?

### 5.2.1 *The joblists as data*

There are two ways to consider what it is that spontaneous joblists are 'doing' as data. Firstly, we can refer to what the existing literature suggests; and secondly, we can examine the congruence between the information obtained on the joblists, in the questionnaires, and at interview.

The literature which reports findings from studies using similar techniques is North American (see Chisholm, 1984). All these studies agree that (a) fixed-choice exercises produce (even) more gender-stereotyped outcomes than do spontaneous joblists (6); (b) girls' lists draw on a narrower range of occupations than do boys' lists; and (c) boys' lists are even more highly male-typed than girls' lists are female-typed. Both my study of American high school pupils (*ibid.*) and Holland's (1989) parallel analysis of the joblists completed by 14 and 16 year-old pupils from the GAOC sample confirm these conclusions. When the joblist entries are ranked into a 'top ten' by straightforward frequency of mention, we find that high-visibility professional occupations (teacher, doctor, dentist) together with highly-stereotyped jobs appropriate to the respondents' gender and broad class origin dominate. Boys' top ten lists, however, are more exclusively male-typed than girls' lists are female-typed. (7)



It would seem, then, that the joblists task elicits a fairly accurate picture of the gendered and classed worlds in which particular respondent samples live. The occupational structure and the labour market are male-dominated. Women are employed in a narrower range of occupations than are men, they are primarily found in jobs which are understood as 'feminine', and they are generally under male authority in the workplace. Most girls in the GAOC sample came from families in which parents and siblings were employed in highly gender-stereotyped, sex-segregated and manual or lower level service occupations; they went to school with those from similar backgrounds; and they lived in neighbourhoods with people in much the same situation as themselves (cf. Chapter 3).

What relationships do joblists entries have with aspirations and networks? We can answer this question by examining the 60 complete sets of data available for the 1984 interview sample. (8) Firstly, the job girls wrote down on their questionnaire as their current first choice generally corresponded with what they subsequently said to be the case in interview. (9) This congruence was especially strong for the younger (first-year) girls. Of the 60 sets of data, 45 were exactly congruent between questionnaire and interview. A further 8 were broadly congruent, i.e. the *ordering* of their aspirations differed between the two data sources. The 7 cases of clear incongruity (where none of the questionnaire aspirations crop up at all in interview) are all from the older (third-year) girls. (10) 40 of the 60 girls had also entered their current aspiration into the joblist they had *previously* completed, generally as one of the first few jobs on their list. We can therefore conclude that in the majority of cases, the joblists task uses current aspirations as one source of inspiration for the exercise (and not the other way around). (11) Similarly, in my American study (*ibid.*), over four-fifths of one of the first three jobs that girls listed later turned out to be their current aspiration. (12)

In constructing their joblists, girls might also have used the jobs that their parents, relatives, neighbours and other adults they knew had. The questionnaire asked pupils to enter such job networks into sets of boxes (after they had given their own aspirations and expectations). About three of the ten jobs spontaneously listed were subsequently entered into these boxes. We already know that high-visibility professional occupations appear very frequently on all children's joblists. In this study, the most common entry in the box for 'other adults' was 'teacher'.

But for most of these girls, the majority of ten joblist entries arise neither from their own current aspirations, nor from the occupations they included in their networks (on the questionnaire). This may simply mean that for girls aged 11-14 and (perhaps) from working class backgrounds, adults' *occupational* identities are not centrally salient personal features. Nevertheless, the highly-bounded perspectives that most girls display through their joblists do not come from a *mechanical* transference of the occupational world with which they are most familiar. The joblists appear to tap gendered and classed perspectives in which perceptions of occupational structure become somehow 'tailored to fit.'

### 5.2.2 *Perceptions of occupational structure*

We can now ask whether the 212 different jobs the 169 girls included on their joblists approximately comprise the occupational world in which they live.

The girls' 'working occupational universe' was constructed step by step. Firstly, the different jobs mentioned by the 60 interview respondents on their joblists were noted. Secondly, any new jobs that were listed by these girls' formmates were added to the list (a further 58 joblists). This process was repeated twice more, using joblists from the parallel forms (N = 50) and, finally, 26 respondents from a fourth school. (13)

The occupations on the resulting composite list were scored on a five-point scale according to the actual proportions of women and men in the job concerned. (14) Occupations most heavily staffed by women were given a score of 1; conversely, those most heavily staffed by men were given a score of 5; occupations in which the staffing ratio is broadly balanced were scored at 3; occupations tending clearly towards one or other sex were scored at 2 or 4 appropriately. (15) (Appendix V lists the jobs and their scores.)

Table 5.1 (below) shows the distribution of jobs across the resulting 'gender scale'. Each column successively adds in the numbers of 'new' jobs that came up as each fresh set of data were considered.

**Table 5.1 : Number and distribution of occupations mentioned in girls' joblists (N)**

| Gender score           | Interview sample | Interview forms | Parallel forms | School 4 |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------|
| 1                      | 40               | 41              | 45             | 45       |
| 2                      | 8                | 11              | 14             | 14       |
| 3                      | 15               | 19              | 25             | 25       |
| 4                      | 11               | 16              | 23             | 26       |
| 5                      | 67               | 87              | 99             | 101      |
| non-codable#           | 3                | 3               | 6              | 7        |
| Total N different jobs | 144              | 177             | 212            | 218      |
| N respondents          | 60               | 119             | 169            | 195      |

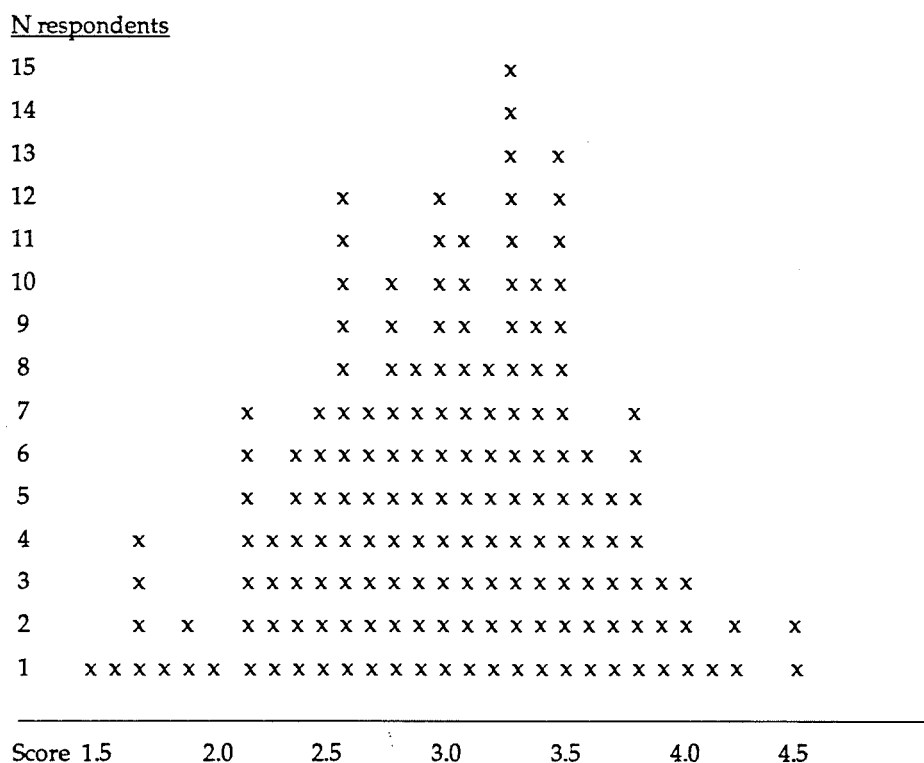
# In subsequently scoring individual joblists, these occupations were given a rating of 3. Their number and frequency of mention are not significant in their effect upon cumulative scores.

The figures show that a working universe of female-staffed jobs is largely already provided by the 60 girls in the interview sample. A working universe of male-staffed jobs is reached quite rapidly, too, but continues accreting, at a gradually slower rate, with increasing sample size. The final group of 26 respondents from School 4 add hardly any 'new' jobs to any category on the gender scale. We can conclude that for a sample of the kind used in this study (primarily working class urban-metropolitan girls), approximately 150 respondents will provide a reliable working occupational universe, a space in which girls express their positioning within gender discourse.

(16) The joblists task is a simple, but effective means of accessing the occupational realisations of that discourse.

Were the girls to have drawn evenly from their occupational world in constructing their joblists, the expected individual gender score would be 3.6. (17) In reality, the girls did not draw evenly from that world. They listed 'female-staffed' jobs more frequently than 'male-staffed' jobs. There are fewer female-staffed jobs in their universe to begin with, and within this girls 'call on' a still smaller range of such jobs to construct their lists. 58% of the jobs in their universe count as male-staffed (gender scores 4 and 5), and the girls' joblists do not concentrate so much on a small range of such jobs. Hence, the actual frequency distribution of individual joblist gender scores shown in Figure 5.1 (overleaf) has a median value of 3.1. (This means that the actual range of gender scores approaches a normal distribution.)

**Figure 5.1 : Frequency distribution of joblist gender scores  
(N = 169)**



Median score = 3.1 Upper quartile score = 3.4 Lower quartile score = 2.6 Range = 1.5 - 4.5

In one sense, girls 'correct' the male domination of the social world of occupations by adjusting their personal constructions (through the medium of the joblists) to produce a gender-balanced occupational world. However, all scaling measures like the one used here tend to regress averaged scores towards the mean of the frequency distribution. Our interest, then, lies less in that majority cluster of respondents whose joblist gender scores fall at the middle range, but rather in examining the extremes of the distribution. In other words : which sub-groups and individuals depart from the norm - how many do so, and how are they located?

We can use the quartile values to re-order the sample into three groups : those girls

whose joblist gender scores fall below the lower quartile of 2.6 (the 'female jobs oriented' group); those with scores between the lower and upper quartiles, i.e. between 2.6 and 3.5 (the 'standard' group); and those with scores of 3.6 and above (the 'male jobs oriented' group). (18) This breaks the sample down into three evenly proportioned 'gender score groups' : 34 girls fall into the 'female jobs oriented' group; 105 fall into the 'standard' group'; and 30 fall into the 'male jobs oriented' group. Table 5.2 (below) compares the distribution of the 169 girls by 'gender score group' and by age.

**Table 5.2 : Gender score groups : distribution by age (N + %)**

| Sample grouping      | 11/12<br>year olds |     | 13/14<br>year olds |     |
|----------------------|--------------------|-----|--------------------|-----|
|                      | N                  | %   | N                  | %   |
| Female jobs oriented | 10                 | 13  | 24                 | 26  |
| Standard             | 50                 | 64  | 55                 | 60  |
| Male jobs oriented   | 18                 | 23  | 12                 | 14  |
| Totals               | 78                 | 100 | 91                 | 100 |

The figures show that the younger girls are much less likely to construct joblists dominated by female-staffed occupations than are the older girls. They are also rather more likely to construct joblists dominated by male-staffed occupations. This underlines the validity of the idea of *progressive gendered closure* in early to mid adolescence, a critical period of personal and educational development.

Table 5.3 (overleaf) switches the perspective to differences between schools. Wilhelma and Dame's Trust girls are overrepresented amongst those respondents constructing joblists dominated by female-staffed occupations, whereas Sternrise girls are overrepresented amongst those constructing 'male dominated' joblists. This pattern

of response is once more what we might have expected from the discussions of social, educational and gender locations in Chapters 3 and 4.

**Table 5.3 : Gender score groups : distribution by school (N + %)**

| Sample groupings     | Wilhelma |     | Dame's Trust |     | Sternrise |     |
|----------------------|----------|-----|--------------|-----|-----------|-----|
|                      | N        | %   | N            | %   | N         | %   |
| Female jobs oriented | 9        | 26  | 19           | 21  | 6         | 13  |
| Standard             | 21       | 62  | 58           | 65  | 26        | 57  |
| Male jobs oriented   | 4        | 12  | 12           | 14  | 14        | 30  |
| Totals               | 34       | 100 | 89           | 100 | 46        | 100 |

When we cross-tabulate school with age, some cell numbers become very small. Nevertheless, the patterns which result (in Table 5.4, below) accord with the findings across the whole of this study.

**Table 5.4 : Gender score groups : distribution by age and by school (N + %)**

| Sample grouping      | Wilhelma |    |       |    | Dame's Trust |    |       |    | Sternrise |    |       |    |
|----------------------|----------|----|-------|----|--------------|----|-------|----|-----------|----|-------|----|
|                      | 11/12    |    | 13/14 |    | 11/12        |    | 13/14 |    | 11/12     |    | 13/14 |    |
|                      | N        | %  | N     | %  | N            | %  | N     | %  | N         | %  | N     | %  |
| Female jobs oriented | 5        | 28 | 4     | 25 | 3            | 7  | 16    | 33 | 2         | 11 | 4     | 15 |
| Standard             | 9        | 50 | 12    | 75 | 30           | 73 | 28    | 58 | 11        | 58 | 16    | 59 |
| Male jobs oriented   | 4        | 22 | 0     | 0  | 8            | 20 | 4     | 9  | 6         | 31 | 7     | 26 |
| Totals (N)           | 18       |    | 16    |    | 41           |    | 48    |    | 19        |    | 27    |    |

There is little difference in the distribution of younger and older Sternrise girls across the three sample groupings. Both Dame's Trust and Wilhelma older girls are underrepresented amongst those respondents constructing joblists dominated by male-staffed occupations. We can (cautiously) interpret these trends in the light of what we already know about the girls and their contexts. Dame's Trust and, even

more, Wilhelma girls are most unfavourably placed to negotiate gendered transitions as these begin to take shape in the early secondary years. Sternrise girls are relatively favourably placed.

We can add that for the 1984 interview sample alone, those girls allocated to potentially transforming positions and to the transitional location of 'struggle' returned joblists with rather higher 'gender scores' than those returned by girls allocated to non-transforming positions and to the transitional locations of 'avoidance' (on average, 3.3 and 2.9 respectively). This means that the former group construct more 'male-dominated' joblists than do the latter group. The five girls allocated to cultural apprenticeship in 1984 all had individual gender scores well below 2.6 (the lower quartile cut-off point). As we know, this group of girls are embedded in a quite specific cultural milieu. I have described (in Chapter 4) their ideological positioning within gender discourse as encapsulated in the term 'separate and equal worlds,' and their joblists reflect that separation.

It would seem that social, educational and gender locations are implicated in the kinds of occupational worlds to which girls have access and which they can construct for themselves. So, for example, the majority of professional-level occupations are still numerically male-dominated, i.e. count in this analysis as male-staffed. Insofar as the averaged joblist gender scores for Sternrise girls are higher than for girls at Wilhelma or Dame's Trust, this is in part due to the fact that Sternrise girls also include more high-status occupations in their joblists. What we are seeing, from a variety of perspectives, are patterns of confluence in social and educational circumstance and in the ways these interact with the gendered construction of social biography. (19)

The occupational universe constructed for the joblists analysis can be rescaled to the



three-point occupational status scale used in Chapter 3 for the analysis of parental and sibling employment. (20) Table 5.5 (below) shows the averaged joblist 'status scores' for those girls who returned 'female jobs oriented' and 'male jobs oriented' joblists. (In other words, for the lower and the upper quartile 'gender score' groups, see p.193-4) Three-point scales do not readily show up differences between groups, but the averaged status scores for those girls who returned male-oriented joblists do diverge from the mean, and do suggest school differences again. The 26 girls from this group who attended Dame's Trust and Sternrise returned joblists of above average status level. This means their lists include more occupations of intermediate non-manual and higher status. But the male-dominated joblists from Wilhelma girls include occupations of much lower status level. This means that this tiny group of four girls listed more male-typed manual/technical jobs. Whilst the Dame's Trust and Sternrise girls are reflecting an orientation towards upward mobility, the tiny group of four first-year Wilhelma girls are oriented towards the working class occupational world.

Table 5.5 : Average joblist status scores for respondents with gender scores of below 2.6 and 3.5+, by school

| Gender score groups              | Averaged joblist status scores |              |           |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
|                                  | Wilhelma                       | Dame's Trust | Sternrise |
| Female jobs oriented<br>(N = 34) | 2.1                            | 2.0          | 2.1       |
| Male jobs oriented<br>(N = 30)   | 2.4                            | 1.8          | 1.8       |

Does this mean that these four girls might actually be interested in entering the male-typed trades themselves? Not at all; their aspirations in 1984 were : nursery teacher, air hostess, secretary and nurse. These four girls' joblists simply exposed the utterly

male-dominated and socially depressed world in which they lived. Judy (1/7) is a good example. With a gender score of 3.6 and a status score of 2.3, her seven-entry joblist looked like this : bus driver, teacher, dinner lady, bus conductor, lorry driver, dustman, shopkeeper. Both on her questionnaire and in interview, she confirmed her hope to become a nursery teacher, though only the more general title of teacher appears on her joblist. Very hesitant in interview, she was unable to recall ever having wanted to be anything else in the past, and could offer no particular reasons for her current choice. She could not remember when her mother had last had paid employment, though she had once been a cleaner; her father was a former local council roadworker, but had been unemployed for some time.

At the other end of the continuum, there were five girls whose joblist status scores were particularly high, at 1.5 or above; they all, of course, produced joblists highly populated by male-staffed and largely professional level occupations. Nadia (3/20, see pp.144-5) fell into this group. She was a girl described by her teachers at Sternrise as very able, and she displayed considerable personal acumen and confidence in interview. She was allocated to the potentially transforming position of 'marginality.' With a gender score of 4.5 and a status score of 1.4, her joblist was : astronaut, astrologer, lawyer, journalist, miner, politician, scientist, space researcher, grave digger, author (the underlined jobs were her aspirations at 14, in 1984). (21)

Case 050, in her third year at Dame's Trust and not drawn into the interview sample, produced a joblist with a gender score of 3.8 and the very highest individual status score. The joblist reads : teacher, doctor, engineer, professor, civil servant, businessman, optician, dentist, [blank], tailor. Her questionnaire aspirations turned out to be politician, professor, and doctor. Her reasons for these choices were that : to be a politician is "a good job for me and I would enjoy it - I love politics"; to be a professor is "a respectable job and *I could get help from my father who is one himself*" (my italics);

and as for becoming a doctor, "I'd like to do something to save humans." She wrote in three additional aspirations on her questionnaire (psychologist, cricketer and social worker) and reported that as a child she had wanted to be a nurse, but had changed her mind because "it's hard and dirty work in my opinion." Her occupational network was primarily populated by professionals, not only her family, but also the neighbours and other adults she chose to enter in the relevant boxes. Considering her expectations for her future, she wrote :

I might get jobs like civil servant in the Foreign Office [if I study politics, foreign affairs and international law] or I can teach these subjects at university...[because] being a politician is difficult. A lot depends on people who give you votes. They will not [do so] if they don't like you...[At 40] I could be an M.P. I could be Foreign Minister if I work hard or I can be Leader of my Party.

Here is a girl who is socially located quite differently from the vast majority of girls in the sample, and we might guess that her gender location would have been into codebending had she been part of the interview sample. (22) This is an appropriate moment to leave the joblists and to look directly at aspirations/expectations as written onto the questionnaire and as voiced in interview; very few of the respondents in this study are comparable in content, style and confidence to the girl described above.

### 5.3 Gendered futures

#### 5.3.1 Job aspirations and expectations : the survey data

We begin by looking at the questionnaire aspirations of the 119 (58 younger and 61 older) girls in the six research-only GAOC forms. Respondents had the opportunity

to enter (in the boxes provided) up to three jobs they thought they would like to do when they started work. They could also add in further aspirations directly below if they wished (though few did so). (23) We know (see pp.189-90) that for the *interview* sample, the job girls entered in the first box on the questionnaire was also what they said they currently wanted to be when they were interviewed two to four months subsequently (and they were not prompted). In the analysis which now follows, the distinction between first and second/third entries is purposely retained.

**Table 5.6 : Questionnaire and interview aspirations :  
the range of different occupations mentioned (N)**

|                       | First choice |           | Subsequent choice(s) |           |
|-----------------------|--------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|
|                       | Q'aire       | Interview | Q'aire               | Interview |
| Number of respondents | N = 119      | N = 61    | N = 119              | N = 61    |
| First (11/12) years   | 39           | 21        | 52                   | 20        |
| Third (13/14) years   | 33           | 22        | 47                   | 17        |

From Table 5.6 (above) we can see that there are no significant age differences in the number of different jobs girls as a group listed either as *questionnaire* or as *interview* aspirations. Interview respondents were much less likely to voice more than one, first-choice aspiration (and the interviewers consciously tried to ensure that girls did voice all ideas they may have). The presence of multiple boxes on a questionnaire sheet does, at least in part, produce responses which are there because there was a space to fill. Second and third listed questionnaire aspirations did not appear so frequently on girls' joblists, nor were they likely to be repeated in interview. They were also inclined to be even more gender-stereotyped in their range and to include more 'fallback' aspirations, i.e. expectations rather than aspirations.

The second page on the questionnaire asked respondents directly about their expectations : what job they thought they would really get when they started work and, if their answer was different from what they had written into the aspiration boxes, to explain the difference. Table 5.7 (below) shows that (at most) halfway through their first year at secondary school, 43% of the younger girls definitely thought they would not really get the kind of work they currently wanted; for the older girls, the proportion rises to 52%. The figures probably understate the extent of their concerns. All girls responded to the aspirations question, but not all did so for the expectations question.

**Table 5.7 : Respondents' questionnaire expectations (N + %)**

| Response               | First (11/12) years |     | Third (13/14) years |     |
|------------------------|---------------------|-----|---------------------|-----|
|                        | N                   | %   | N                   | %   |
| Will attain aspiration | 22                  | 38  | 17                  | 28  |
| Will not attain asp.   | 25                  | 43  | 32                  | 52  |
| Do not know if I will  | 10                  | 17  | 4                   | 7   |
| No response            | 1                   | 2   | 8                   | 13  |
| Totals                 | 58                  | 100 | 61                  | 100 |

Of those girls who thought they would not get the jobs they then wanted, the consensus over the work they expected to get was overwhelming, and similar for both age-groups. The majority thought they would become shop assistants, especially in supermarket chains. (24) Other jobs they mentioned were : secretary / typist, factory work, on market stalls, waitress, cleaner -and one solitary lorry driver! Several simply wrote they thought they would be unemployed. The reasons they gave for the difference between their aspirations and expectations were clear-cut and unanimous. Firstly, unemployment rates are high and there was therefore stiff

competition for jobs. Secondly, they were not at all keen on taking college training courses (i.e. more education, about which they were not enthusiastic). Thirdly, they thought they did not have the skills and talents they presumed to be necessary for the jobs they would have liked. This was so regardless of the actual level of training and qualification demanded for the job in question. These are some of the things they wrote in this context :

Unemployment is high, and I'll be lucky to get any job at all. These kinds of jobs [i.e. in a shop] will be all that's left when I get there. (1/26, Sternrise A)

...because people with A-levels don't all get a good job. In fact some people don't get a job at all. (1/13, Dame's Trust)

I think I would be a vet's helper. I will not get the jobs I want because I am no good at any subject and to be a helper is not nothing...[At 40] I am just helping at the desk at a vet or helping getting a dog on the table or something and getting the medicine. (Case 0350, Sternrise B first year)

[When I leave school I'll] probably be cleaning up and sweeping in a shop or an office...Not many people want to clear up and so many jobs are vacant. All the good jobs get taken straightaway...[When I'm 40] I work on a till in a shop. I get a lot of complaints and get very tired. I don't like it. (Case 0406, Sternrise A third year)

...go to college and then I think I'd get a job as a bank trainee...because being in fashion designing you have to start really with an imaginative mind, I have quite a one but not much. (Case 0409, Sternrise A third year)

We now return to *aspirations*, and consider the kinds of jobs the girls would have liked to look forward to at that time. This analysis distinguishes between first and second/third choices to produce two ranked sequences of those occupations mentioned more than once by the respondent sample, differentiated also by age-group. Table 5.8 (overleaf) ranks first-choice aspirations; Table 5.9 (p.204) ranks all entries.

**Table 5.8 :**  
**Frequency ranking of questionnaire aspirations :**  
**first entries by age and for occupations mentioned by at least two**  
**respondents (N)**

| Rank                       | Occupation    | First years | Third years | Fn mentions |
|----------------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1                          | hairdresser   | 6           | 10          | 16          |
| 2                          | nursery nurse | 2           | 7           | 9           |
| 3                          | teacher       | 3           | 5           | 8           |
| 4                          | designer      | 2           | 3           | 5           |
|                            | vet           | 5           | 0           | 5           |
| 6                          | air hostess   | 2           | 2           | 4           |
|                            | doctor        | 0           | 4           | 4           |
| 8                          | dancer        | 3           | 0           | 3           |
|                            | nurse         | 3           | 0           | 3           |
|                            | shopkeeper    | 3           | 0           | 3           |
| 11                         | actress       | 0           | 2           | 2           |
|                            | bank clerk    | 0           | 2           | 2           |
|                            | cook          | 2           | 0           | 2           |
|                            | policewoman   | 2           | 0           | 2           |
|                            | secretary     | 0           | 2           | 2           |
| N respondents contributing |               | 33          | 37          | 70          |
| N respondents in sample    |               | 58          | 61          | 119         |
| % contributing/sample      |               | 57          | 61          | 59          |

Table 5.9 :

Frequency ranking of questionnaire aspirations :  
all entries, by age and for occupations mentioned by at least three respondents (N)

| Rank | Occupation    | First years | Third years | Fn mentions |
|------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1    | hairdresser   | 12          | 17          | 29          |
| 2    | nursery nurse | 9           | 17          | 26          |
| 3    | teacher       | 9           | 13          | 22          |
| 4    | secretary     | 3           | 15          | 18          |
| 5    | designer      | 5           | 5           | 10          |
| 6    | bank work     | 0           | 9           | 9           |
|      | nurse         | 9           | 0           | 9           |
|      | policewoman   | 9           | 0           | 9           |
| 9    | actress       | 0           | 8           | 8           |
| 10   | cook          | 6           | 0           | 6           |
|      | sales jobs    | 0           | 6           | 6           |
| 12   | air hostess   | 5           | 0           | 5           |
| 13   | dancer        | 4           | 0           | 4           |
|      | doctor        | 0           | 4           | 4           |
|      | model         | 4           | 0           | 4           |
|      | lawyer        | 0           | 4           | 4           |
| 17   | driver        | 0           | 3           | 3           |
|      | engineer      | 0           | 3           | 3           |
|      | shopkeeper    | 3           | 0           | 3           |
|      | vet           | 3           | 0           | 3           |

Note: Total numbers of respondents contributing to this sequence as a proportion of the sample numbers cannot offer reliable orientation because respondents varied in the number of boxes they completed.



The stereotypical quality of *both* ranked sequences of aspirations is predictable (if rather depressing). *Vet* and *doctor* are the only first-choice aspirations mentioned by at least two girls which are not both female-staffed and thoroughly female-typed. (On the other hand, 40% of the girls gave as their first choice an aspiration mentioned by no other girl in the sample; see Appendix VI and p.210) But there are also unexpected absences in Table 5.8, which are reinforced when we include all (not only first-choice) aspirations (in Table 5.9). In particular, some jobs which are almost wholly staffed by women are *not aspired to in large numbers* by these girls. For the first-choice aspirations shown in Table 5.8, nursing, secretarial and bank work are low down on the list. Shop assistant does not appear at all. On the other hand, hairdressing is overwhelmingly popular; we shall return to this point later in the discussion. If we then compare the patterns in Table 5.8 with those in Table 5.9, we can summarise their meaning very simply. Firstly, secretarial work is indeed nothing more than a fallback job for girls. It rises up the ranking list only when second/third aspirations are added in. It is also much more 'present' for the older than for the younger respondents, exactly what we would expect as girls gradually come to terms with the encroaching realities of the labour market. The same interpretation holds for working in a bank, which almost wholly appears as a second or third choice, and exclusively for older girls. The pinnacle of desirability which secretarial and bank work appear to represent for working-class girls in London (and presumably elsewhere too) is a masquerade : desirability is the equivalent of accessibility in a labour market where the alternatives are highly undesirable.

Secondly, across the early secondary years, girls' aspirations gradually focus down into stereotypical 'women's jobs.' The ranking sequences in Table 5.8 and, especially, Table 5.9 show a much larger concentration of older girls' response into those occupations which were mentioned with the greatest frequency. (This also supports

the view that the second/third entries on the questionnaire aspiration boxes elide with expectations.)

It will always prove difficult to expose gendered educational-occupational channelling very precisely and clearly using cross-sectional data, regardless of the sample size. Girls aged 11/12 already voice mainly gender-appropriate aspirations - for women, an absolutely very narrow range of occupations to begin with. Additionally, we need to weigh up the relative contributions of symbolic and real labour market factors in shaping girls' aspirations. One proposition might run that it is the symbolic dimension which positions girls, but it is real labour market factors which fix and realise those positionings (see Chapter 2, section 2.1 here). However, we know very little about how each set of factors operate at different ages and stages. In any event, their effects will be mediated and specified according to social and educational contexts, as well as to the macro/micro political and economic climate. The age-stage at which girls are confronted with such factors may also be implicated in their consequences for the construction of social identity and biography. We simply do not know very much in this area. But it is clear that the gap between aspirations and expectations opens up at an early age.

### 5.3.2 *Job aspirations and expectations over time : the interview data*

Here we look at the ways in which girls' aspirations remained stable or shifted between 1984 and 1986, between 11-14 and 14-16. In the discussion which now follows, the term 'aspiration' refers to the jobs girls said they would like to have *in interview*, unless otherwise specifically stated.

30 of the 61 girls aspired to status level 1 occupations in 1984. (25) Nine parents or sets of parents (26) were themselves employed in Level 1 occupations (though not, by and

large, in the Level 1 occupations to which their various daughters aspired. In no case did the occupation of a parent and the aspiration of the daughter coincide). 43 of the 61 girls interviewed aspired to jobs at a higher status level than those of at least their mothers and, by and large, their fathers. Their *expectations*, as we have seen, are altogether rather less exalted. We also know from the analysis of sibling employment (in Chapter 3) that even where young women do succeed in entering the routine non-manual sector, they are likely to become cleaners and dinner ladies as women returners (if they repeat their mothers' experience).

The level 1 occupations to which the 1984 interview respondents said they aspired were: actress (3), journalist (3), nurse (3), policewoman (3), vet (3), dancer (2), teacher (2), lawyer (2), archaeologist, coroner, doctor, fashion designer, infant/primary teacher, interpreter, model, pilot/space researcher, police forensic work, and singer. (The level 1 jobs in which their parents were employed overlapped for only three jobs: nurse, policeman, and teacher.) These occupations may be generally majority-male-staffed in practice, but by no means all are strongly male-typed in cultural terms. The relative popularity of policewoman crops up repeatedly across this dataset, and deserves closer examination; 'Cagney and Lacey' may have achieved rather more than some would wish, but apart from media influences, there are some questions worth pursuing here. (27)

We now turn to the patterns of stability and change over time for the 36 girls who were interviewed more than once between 1984 and 1986. Only those girls allocated to (and remaining in) potentially transforming positions did not lower the level of their aspirations over time. The general scaling down of levels of aspiration is particularly noticeable for younger girls, i.e. over the first three years of secondary schooling. Evidently this scaling down is related to a girl's sense of her achievement and, in many cases, a decreasing engagement with, or declining attachment to,

schooling. The two factors are *independently* important: it is not the case that all girls except for those in potentially transforming gender locations are low achievers at school.

Of the 36 girls in the follow-through study, 23 changed their minds about what kind of job they wanted, and 13 did not. Of the 19 younger girls, 13 had changed their minds by the time they had reached the spring of their third year at secondary school; of the 17 older girls, 10 had changed their minds by the spring term of the fifth form. The extent of change is in principle refreshing, but in practice disturbing, for two sets of reasons. Firstly, the changes between 11 and 14 are prone to involve *scaling down* of aspirations. The changes between 14 and 16 are prone to involve the *narrowing* of aspirations to what is perceived as realistically available. Secondly, these two periods are split by option choice at 14. (28) There is little question that option choices fix gendered transitions more firmly. The girls in this study (with some exceptions (29)) selected their subject options with their current job aspirations in mind (see Chapter 6). For the majority of the girls in this study, the effect of option choice was to *close down* alternatives, both in status and gender terms. The main kind of change then left to them was but a further narrowing of their hopes and expectations.

Should they have chosen the 'wrong' subjects (i.e. they come to dislike the work or the teacher, and/or they do badly), they are faced with the problem of perhaps having to change their aspiration. They may think they will not get the necessary entry qualifications, or that they will not enjoy a job whose content they imagine to be similar to the subject they dislike or do badly at. On the other hand, should they change their mind about what job they would like to have, they may find they lack a subject they need as an entry qualification. In either case, the outcome is much more likely to entail the adjustment of aspirations into less desirable and more gender-appropriate occupations. It is precisely here that the 'safety-net' of doing typing as

a fallback kicks into action. (30)

By 1986, then, the list of current aspirations for the girls in the interview study reads as follows : secretary (8), hairdresser (4), nursery nurse (3), bank work (3); then actress, work with animals, policewoman, sales, scientists, and teacher (2 each). Aspirations mentioned once only were : baker / cake decorator, barrister, cook / chef, running an evening dance school, export administration, in a factory, nurse, psychiatrist, travel agent, and writer. (31) In Chapter 6, we go on to explore the kinds of 'transition biographies' that led to these outcomes.

#### *5.4 Occupational semantics and gender discourse*

This chapter closes with a speculative consideration of girls' occupational aspirations as linked to the semantics of gender discourse. It was argued earlier (Chapter 2, section 2.3.1) that an underlying set of cultural meanings, which frame gender relations in all areas of life, find an occupational expression through dimensions of cultures of femininity which are differentially inscribed into our understandings of what specific jobs and working contexts 'are.' (32) The semantic map which was suggested in that discussion is now used to 'place' the aspirations of girls in this study.

There is only a small literature which addresses itself to what might be termed cultural analyses of the gender-specific occupational structure (as opposed to structural analyses of the gender-specific labour market). In my view, there is a rich seam to be mined here, and one which can productively integrate historical, anthropological, sociological and cross-cultural perspectives. Within the scope of this thesis, I cannot offer a firm evidential base for my speculations, and in any case

I doubt there are sufficient secondary sources to do so. Therefore, the placing of occupations onto the map is intuitive at present, and is intended as a spur to further thinking rather than as a definitive statement. Further, the frequency with which occupations were mentioned by the girls in this study must be seen as directly linked to the historically specific character of the sample. We are looking at mainly working-class girls living and growing up in Inner London during the eighties, with its own (youth) labour market(s) and in the social and economic climate of the times. Whilst I would expect a high degree of overlap with other samples, for all the reasons discussed earlier in this chapter, I would nevertheless expect to see some variations. It could be the small-scale, subtle variations which 'count.' (In fact, differing patterns of frequency of mention might contribute to the specification of 'cultural fingerprints'.')

A third proviso is that we should not lose sight of the *whole range* of aspirations altogether. It is not the case that girls do not consider 'gender-unconventional' jobs for themselves at all. They do not do so in large numbers, but certainly more would do so were labour market conditions and schooling systems differently structured. So, for example, if we were to look at the current aspirations *ever* mentioned by the girls in the interview sample, a third of these would count as male-typed to some extent (manual trades, driving, scientific jobs, computing, etc.). This group of aspirations do come from rather less than a third of the individual girls concerned; but even this figure suggests that far more girls are interested in gender-unconventional jobs than many commentators suppose (see Appendix VI for a map of all aspirations ever mentioned).

However, we are now interested in identifying the core features of occupational gender discourse. Figure 5.2 (overleaf) therefore recasts the ranking sequence of aspirations from Table 5.9 (p.204) into a semantic map. This map uses the categories

and levels from Figure 2.2 (p.74), which pictured the cultural field of femininity. Occupations are placed onto the map on the basis of what seem to be the *dominant* cultural elements of femininity that define its character and meaning. Some occupations are bound to fall between categories (as in the case of air hostess, I think), and there may be some disagreement about where to place others, but I think the map is broadly defensible as it stands.

**Figure 5.2 : Occupational semantics :  
a map of girls' questionnaire aspirations**

| Dimensions of femininity |           |            | Status/qualification levels  |                             |                                      |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|                          |           |            | 1                            | 2                           | 3                                    |
| PURITY                   | MORALITY  | REGULATORS | bank clerk 9<br>secretary 18 | teacher 22<br>policewoman 9 | lawyer 4                             |
| PRODUCTION               | ECONOMY   | EXECUTORS  | cook 6<br>air hostess 5      | shopkeeper 3                | engineer 3                           |
| POLLUTION                | SEXUALITY | ATTRACTORS | hairdresser 29               | model 4                     | designer 10<br>dancer 4<br>actress 8 |
| REPRODUCTION             | FAMILY    | CARETAKERS | nursery nurse 26             | nurse 9                     | vet 3<br>doctor 4                    |

**Note :** Only occupations mentioned by more than two respondents are included and all questionnaire entries are included. (The data is therefore that shown earlier in Table 5.9.)

The figure next to each occupational entry indicates the number of times it was mentioned

The most 'popular' occupations on the map are, of course, hairdressing, nursery nursing, teaching and secretarial work. With the exception of teaching, these are the jobs which are most readily and immediately accessible to young women in London - but secretarial work is not the most frequently mentioned aspiration, although it is undoubtedly the kind of employment most plentiful (in fact, there is a shortage of secretarial and related staff in London), particularly if we accept the broad definition

of secretarial work that the girls used. Secretaries are one occupational group for which a number of useful studies are available (for example, McNally, 1979; Pringle, 1988), on which basis the evidently reluctant acceptance of the job amongst the girls in this study is explicable. The central feature of the work is the gendered relationship of regulation to which secretaries are subject, framed within a 'husband-wife' pairing in which 'skills', 'performance' and 'femininity' become inextricably entwined.

Neither is shop assistant at all 'popular', although it is known to be accessible and figures prominently in girls' *expectations* (as we saw earlier in the chapter). There is an accumulated folk knowledge about the vagaries and hardships of shopwork which stretches back into the nineteenth century, the development of the first department stores and H.C. Wells' *Kipps* (centrally about, in this case, a young *male* shop assistant). (33) It used, at least, to offer a certain respectability, and so was favoured over factory work (as, for example, amongst Roberts' (1984) respondents growing up in the early years of the century). But shopwork always also meant monotony and authoritarian regimentation; characteristics I recall only too well myself from Saturday and holiday jobs. Now that shopwork has lost its overtones of a 'respectability' which rubbed off onto employees, it offers rather little within gendered occupational semantics - unless associated with clothes and cosmetics, by far the most favoured kind of sales work amongst the girls (and additionally drawing it closer towards the sexuality/attractors category).

The most intriguing case, in my view, is that of hairdressing, which is consistently and overwhelmingly popular amongst girls in this study, of whatever age, *and* as a first-choice aspiration. Hairdressing is well-known to be highly exploitative of young women's labour; the girls themselves were not unaware of this, and certainly their mothers knew - several had strongly discouraged their daughters from going



into the occupation. On the other hand, there were several cases in which girls' mothers had wanted to become hairdressers themselves, did not do so, and encouraged their daughters to 'live out' this aspiration for them (and for no other mother's aspiration or occupation did girls relate similar stories). It would appear that, in some way, girls prefer the negative aspects of hairdressing to those of secretarial work (at least prospectively). I argued earlier (in Chapter 2) that hairdressing speaks to the most powerful dimension of femininity: sexuality/attractors; and it offers women the opportunity to work with other women both as colleagues and as clients in a highly social, collective work context. In practical terms, it offers opportunities for self-employment and working from home; and it is one of the few women's jobs which traditionally offered a formally recognised training.

There are few studies of hairdressers, but clues from the literature suggest there should be more. In a retrospective study of West German women's lives, Krüger et al. (1989) found that patterns of employment after marriage and children varied systematically according to the occupation in which women had qualified and worked beforehand. Some of these differences were directly explained by structural shifts in labour market opportunities across the four post-war decades of these women's adult working lives (so, for example, the decline of dressmaking as a skilled trade). Many women were not able (or preferred not) to return to work in their former occupation, so took other kinds of jobs. But both nursery nurses and hairdressers were more likely never to have returned to paid work after having children. In the case of hairdressing, there are reasons why it might be difficult to return to employment in the trade. Employers are often reluctant to take on 'older' and 'less attractive' women, and the work is much more physically taxing than most people realise. Hairdressing is a young woman's job. However, this does not explain why many ex-hairdressers did not return to employment *at all*, and structural factors could not account for the differences they found. Krüger et al. concluded that the

*Berufsbilder* of both hairdressing and nursery nurses must somehow be implicated in the self-image and ways of life of those women who take up these occupations. Whether it was the occupational culture (and its socialisation processes) that had encouraged predispositions or a self-selection into an occupation (or both) that underlay the differences they found, they could not say. In other words, they were beginning to wonder about the cultural semantics of these occupations in relation to femininity.

In the UK, Beuret and Makings (1987) have reported on how young women hairdressers in the North of England maintained a facade of traditionalism in their relationships with their unemployed boyfriends by a subtle system of financial ruses and collusion (to hide the fact that they were the paying partners). The writers interpreted this situation as a positive strategy in which the young women really were the ones holding power, though they contrived to keep up the culturally appropriate appearance of the contrary. It was nevertheless an essentially accommodative response to their dilemma as far as the production and reproduction of gender relations is concerned. I am tempted to ask whether hairdressing is the commonest occupational expression of working class female unproductive resistance, of the kind mooted by McRobbie (1978b). This, of course, begs the question of what might constitute productive resistance. As far as occupational semantics are concerned, I cannot (yet) begin to suggest an answer.

This chapter ends, then, with a series of questions rather than answers. Specifically, it suggests that cultural analysis has a great deal to offer to the study of gender and occupational choice processes, and that this does not have to be viewed as an alternative to a more straightforward materialist analysis of women's oppression. The findings and the arguments presented here by no means deny or downgrade the importance of structural mechanisms of selection/allocation which are directed

towards the maintenance of a segmented, segregated workforce and thus towards the reproduction of social inequalities. On the contrary, it is manifestly so that occupational segregation by sex constitutes a fundamental feature of the objective social worlds in which all girls grow up. In constructing their own futures, girls must take this 'fact of life' into account, even though they may resent it and/or present their aspirations/expectations as free choices.

However, it is rarely necessary explicitly to marginalise and exclude girls from wide sectors of the labour market. It is certainly rarely necessary to apply direct pressure and opposition, whether from school, family or employers. In a variety of ways, girls generally come to exclude themselves, well in advance of the transition between education and paid work. They do so at least in part because the range of the possible is inherently delineated by gender, and so speaks intimately to identity. The range of the occupationally possible arises not only as a consequence of what girls *see* around them, but also as a result of what is culturally *thinkable*. The structuring of channels of transition through secondary education, vocational training, job recruitment and occupational socialisation is by no means neutral in these respects. Its effects can be 'read off' from the contraction in the range of girls' aspirations/expectations over time, shown very clearly in this study.

In this analysis, I have attempted not only to show how girls' perspectives of the occupational world are shaped by what they see around them, but in particular to find ways of releasing the dimension of the thinkable. I have done so both by searching for the finer patternings of girls' occupational aspirations, and by reaching below the surface 'monotony' of the dominant patterns. In my view, we shall progress no further in understanding processes of social reproduction and change unless we direct more of our attention towards hidden structures of cultural meaning *in relation to* surface patterns of social origins and destinations. Empirical-

ly, this is a demanding challenge, and I do not claim to have made much headway. Nevertheless, I think that the analysis in this chapter has been able to indicate the potential of the idea of occupational semantics here. The scope of the model of gender relations enables us to find ways of working at the surface level of cultural analysis without being restricted to it. The next and final chapter of this thesis now attempts to set the foundation for future research in similar vein, but with a wider remit. It returns to the interview data alone, and focuses on describing gendered youth transitions both holistically and in socio-biographical process. Above all, perhaps, this final part of the analysis indicates the complexity of the task at hand.

#### Footnotes

1 The respondents completed the tasks in the classroom during lesson time. A researcher introduced and supervised data collection; a teacher was always also present, but researchers explained in advance that teachers should not suggest to pupils what they could or should write down. Both teacher and researcher explained what was required in factual terms and responded to spelling queries where specifically asked.

2 We emphasised that the joblists task was not some sort of test, but that we wanted them to help us to get as long a list of different jobs as possible, so for this reason, it would be more helpful if they did not share their ideas with others. A check on collective responses was carried out subsequently, and although there are some clear examples of this, the practice was not widespread as far as one could tell. Field impressions were that pupils responded as hoped to the task; first-years in particular found it all quite fun, and made some benign play of keeping their lists 'secret'.

3 In total, 169 girls (78 first-years, 91 third-years) completed the joblists task, distributed as follows: Wilhelma: 34 (18 first-years, 16 third-years); Dame's Trust: 89 (41 first years, 48 third-years); Sternrise: 46 (19 first-years, 27 third-years). As a girls' school, Dame's Trust contributes a higher proportion of the sample; and at Sternrise, the B stream forms both contained fewer girls than boys and were rather smaller than were the A stream forms. The data analysis takes account of this distribution where necessary. 13 further respondents were excluded from the joblists analysis because their lists contained five or fewer jobs. 5 of these cases were Wilhelma girls, and 8 came from Dame's Trust (most of which were girls for whom English was a second language).

4 To provide for comparability between individuals, forms and schools, a time limit of three minutes was set. Most pupils could easily write down ten jobs in this time; much longer would have meant that those having difficulty would have been assisted or distracted by their neighbours, and those who had finished would get bored (and noisy, which teachers wished to minimise!). Of the 27 girls who did not return ten jobs, 19 offered nine/eight entries, and 8 offered seven/six.

5 The simplest general picture is obtained by dividing the number of different jobs listed (212) by the number of respondents (169), giving an arithmetical average of 1.25 different 'jobs per girl'. This compares with an

average of 1.1 for an overlapping GAO sample whose joblists were analysed in Holland (1989), following similar procedures to those used on a quite different sample in Chisholm (1984). Holland's analysis combined joblists returned by third-years (the same group used in this analysis) and fifth-years in the sample, but did not differentiate by school and age. The differences between the simple averages noted above are in conformity with the general argument made in this thesis and earlier (see Chisholm, 1985) with respect to gendered educational-occupational channelling processes: ceteris paribus, the older the girls, the more restricted are their occupational worlds. Similarly, in Holland's analysis the average 'jobs per boy' was 2.1, noticeably higher than for the girls in that subsample. This reflects the wider range from which boys can construct their occupational worlds, given the character of occupational structure and its sexual segregation. The joblists analyses conducted with American pupils aged between 10 and 17 are in conformity with all these findings (Chisholm, 1984). Marini's (1978) review of North American research concluded that gendered processes of closure with increasing age are clearly evidenced in the literature both on perceptions of the occupational structure and on occupational aspirations.

6 This was similarly confirmed in my American study (Chisholm, 1984), in which the junior high school students were asked to rank the personal desirability of the 'top ten' occupations which had resulted from their previous completion of spontaneous joblists (without knowing this to be the source of the fixed choice list).

7 Holland's analysis produces the following 'top tens' for each sex :

girls : teacher, secretary, nurse, doctor, hairdresser, shop assistant, air hostess, milkman, dentist, electrician, builder, vet (ranging from 70% to 15% inclusion by respondents); boys : teacher, lorry driver, bus driver, policeman, plumber, postman, pilot, doctor, electrician, milkman, shopkeeper (ranging from 58% to 11% inclusion). Corresponding lists from my American study are available for the two age-groups under consideration in the current study. The 'top tens' were, then :

Grade 6 (10/11 year olds) : girls : teacher, doctor, nurse, secretary, police officer, fire officer, lawyer, vet, baker, actress; boys : teacher, police officer, doctor, army, fire officer, secretary, mechanic, pilot, football player, sales clerk/construction worker/airforce (the last three all at rank 10).

Grade 8 (14/15 year olds) : girls : teacher nurse, doctor, waitress, secretary, singer, chef/cook, pilot, member of Congress, coach; boys : teacher, doctor, police officer, fire officer, mail carrier, carpenter, scientist, chef/cook, pilot.

The American sample included a wider range of social class backgrounds than does the GAO sample, which is reflected in the differences between the two studies' lists; additionally, military occupations figure prominently in the American lists because these were children of EUCOM personnel.

8 One interview respondent did not complete the survey instruments.

9 The question on current aspirations was the first item on the questionnaire (cf. Appendix IV). Three numbered boxed spaces were given for response, accompanied by supplementary boxes for the pupils to write in what sorts of school subjects and qualifications/training they thought they needed for the job(s) they gave, and the reasons why they would like to have that job/those jobs. As a check that they had written multiple responses down in rank order of preference, they were asked immediately below the boxes to write in their first choice again if it was different from what they had written in the first box.

10 At least four of these 'incongruent' cases emerged across the interview sequence to be girls in complex and unhappy life situations, whose transition prospects as they approached 16+ were also poor (so, for example, Yvonne (case 3/1), see Ch.6). Incongruity of response as defined here appears, in itself, to act as an indicator of conflicts. Not all such conflicts need be negatively problematic, however. Eleanor (case 3/10, see Ch.4),

produced some incongruity of response across data sources too. On the questionnaire she wrote in computer programming as her first choice aspiration, with police forensic work as her second choice. In interview, she claimed police forensic work to be her first choice and some form of scientific work as her second choice (computer programming was not mentioned at all). In subsequent interviews it transpired that it had been Eleanor's mother who wanted her daughter to go into police forensic work, not Eleanor herself.

11 Where aspirations do not appear on joblists, there are probably grounds for supposing this to be a potential indicator of various conflicts (cf. footnote 10) - or perhaps that aspirations are offered upon request because young people feel they 'ought' to be able to say what they want to be, although they might be quite undecided. In any event, the rather more complex patterns of congruity and incongruity across instruments for the older girls offer food for thought at the level of method. I suspect that the younger girls were more inclined to regard the survey instruments as part of their schoolwork (although it was explained to them that this was not the case), and that most were still keen to perform 'well' at school by applying themselves genuinely to the tasks they were set. Concomitantly, I suspect that the older girls had learnt how to fulfil school demands without necessarily revealing themselves in the process, and that since it was explained that the survey instruments were not schoolwork or subject to teacher control, they did not feel they had to apply themselves to the tasks in the same way as the younger girls did.

12 The corresponding figures for boys were somewhat lower, but at least three-fifths of the first three jobs listed by boys, age for age, were also their current aspirations. This is linked to a further age-related aspect of the American data, in which the occupational range of boys' joblists, whilst remaining firmly male-typed, became gradually wider grade by grade. Girls' lists stagnated.

13 This fourth school functioned as a control for the curriculum action aspect of the GAOC project; here, the baseline survey data was collected, once only, in autumn 1984. No further research, or any curriculum action, was carried out at all in this school in 1984 (though it subsequently became an action school at a later stage of the project). The data added in here similarly functions as a control for the task at hand, i.e., defining the working validity of the occupational universe, and is not included in the joblists analysis which follows in this chapter.

14 There are no comprehensive summary statistics available to construct such a scale, especially not at the level of occupational detail which crops up in the joblists. However, the broad degree of sexual segregation for most occupations is not a contentious issue for teachers in the field. Scale allocations were made independently by the writer and two further 'expert' coders. There was no disagreement between the raters.

15 This gender scale is based on the 'objective' gender-typing of an occupation, not its 'subjective' gender-typing in the sense of what people (in this case, young people) culturally understand to be a 'male' and a 'female' job. We could probably have produced such a scale, but since data on this issue is not available from the respondents themselves, the result would have been adults' views, or indeed adults' views on what children think. Both seemed less satisfactory than the simple 'objective' approach, especially since we know (from the earlier discussion) that children/young people very much use the patterns of occupational sex segregation in the real world as a resource in constructing their joblists.

16 The sample size required to produce an occupational universe for boys (of all social backgrounds) would probably be rather larger, given what we know about the occupational structure and the ways in which joblists are constructed. Similarly, samples of girls from other class fractions, cultural contexts, etc., might likewise need to be larger (or perhaps smaller).

17 The frequency distribution of the occupational universe is as follows: gender score 1: 21% of the occupations mentioned; score 2: 6%; score 3 (including non-codable): 15%; score 4: 11%; score 5: 47%. The expected

individual score is then :  $[(2.1 \times 1) + (0.6 \times 2) + (1.5 \times 3) + (1.1 \times 4) + (4.7 \times 6)]/10 = 3.6$ . Another way to express this expected score is simply to say that any individual list could be expected to include 3 female-staffed jobs, 6 male-staffed jobs, and 1 job where the staffing is roughly balanced.

18 The 43rd value from the upper end of the gender score frequency distribution is the first score of 3.4, i.e. it only just edges into that group of scores. Additionally, the score of 3.5 is a large group, containing 13 respondents. For this reason, it was decided to place the upper boundary at 3.6.

19 Brown (1987, Ch.6) found that school differences in patterns of occupational aspirations were more marked for (fifth-year) girls than for boys. Brown was interested in pupil orientations to schooling in three comprehensives in urban South Wales. In the 'middle-class' comprehensive, pupils' aspirations were generally of a higher status than in the two 'working-class' comprehensives. The majority of girls at the 'working-class' comprehensive which had formerly been a grammar school wanted to go into secretarial work. At the 'working-class' comprehensive which had formerly been a secondary modern school, the majority of girls said they would like to find childcare jobs. These differences were reflected in the girls' option choice patterns. Brown also divided his respondents into a three-fold pupil-defined typology: the 'swots', the 'ordinary kids' and the 'rems' (= 'remedials'). Aspirations varied accordingly. 75% of the girl 'swots' aspired to professional/administrative jobs. Two-thirds of the girl 'ordinary kids' chose evenly between personal service and clerical jobs. 43% of the girl 'rems' chose personal service jobs. Brown was evidently picking up some of the same patterns of confluence that this study has.

20 The scaling procedure paralleled that used to construct the gender score frequency distribution. The occupations in the girls' working universe were each given a score of 1, 2 or 3 according to the status level to which their Goldthorpe-Hope occupational categories were allocated in Chapter 3. (The girls' joblists included no jobs in categories which had not been included in the analysis of parental and sibling employment, though they did include occupations in which none of their parents and siblings were employed.) The joblists produced by those girls in the upper and lower gender score quartile groups were then rescaled and individually averaged accordingly. The figures in Table 5.5 are therefore grouped averages.

21 An intriguing aspect of the joblists, which we have no space to pursue further here, is the way in which they are sequenced by associations and oppositions. In Nadia's list, for example, astronaut and astrologer illustrate both sound association and thematic opposition; lawyer and journalist are occupations which commonly appeared together as aspirations; miner and politician are an example of oppositional association (in 1984 the miners' dispute was gathering momentum); scientist and space researcher repeat both sound and thematic linkage; space researcher and grave digger picture a humorous and incongruous oppositional association with an underlying spatial opposition.

22 She would have presumably also fitted the patterns of response Holland (1989) reported for her study of middle-class adolescent girls' conceptions of the division of labour, although her sample came from public rather than state schools. I have suggested earlier (in Chapter 4) that the middle-class girls in state schools are likely to come from different class fractions than those in private schooling. Specifically, those in state schools will come especially from liberal professional homes, especially those in which parents themselves have achieved professional middle class status through educational achievement.

23 See footnote 5 and Appendix IV; see Holland (1989) for reference to the kinds of response elicited by different wording on this topic and to the question of research terminology.

24 Holland's (op.cit.) analysis of similar data for the fifth-year GAO respondents reproduces these patterns : 58% of these girls thought they would end up working in shops, factories or eating places.

25 Again, the status levels used here are those applied to the analysis in Chapter 3 and to the joblists in section 5.2 of this chapter.

26 In other words : the single parent with whom the girl lived, or at least one parent of the two where both were present in the household.

27 Roula Ziogou and Kiki Deliyannis at the University of Thessaloniki are currently replicating the GAOC study. The findings from the joblists and questionnaires are very similar to those reported in this chapter. The Greek study has also noted, with equal surprise, the popularity of the police force amongst girls, and the researchers there have reached similar conclusions : that police work offers girls the prospect of social respect and a degree of authority which is generally denied to women (personal communication, March 1990).

28 The National Curriculum changes the character of the 14+ threshold to some extent, but exactly how it will change and to what degree the gendered curriculum will survive in a different guise is currently difficult to predict with confidence.

29 The exceptions were those girls located in codebending and marginality for whom option choices were consciously aimed at 'keeping all options open' as they put it. It is for such high achieving girls that teachers ensure the principle of curriculum balance is implemented in their option choices. other words, the girls in this study were, on the whole, moving gradually towards the destinations at which they could expect to arrive.

32 There is no specialised term for this idea in English. The concept of *Berufsbild*, literally, 'occupational picture', catches the sense rather better, although it also has an official meaning rather more like the English 'job/occupational specification'. The MSC has in part adopted this through the attempt to specify core skills, occupational families, etc.

33 Bradley (1989) has documented the social history of shopwork in relation to its 'gendering' across time and within different branches of the occupation, which underlines very strongly the kinds of points being made here. She offers a number of occupational case studies of this kind, which are extremely valuable in drawing together information from a wide variety of disparate sources. We need much more of this kind of research if we are to make headway in the task of grounding the kind of cultural mapping I am suggesting here.



## 6 Gender and the management of transitions

In the preceding three chapters we have looked at girls' worlds from different perspectives : socially, educationally, occupationally and within gender discourse. We have integrated the dimension of biography theoretically, and we have compared the younger (11/12 year old) with the older (13/14 year old) girls at various points in order to make inferences about the dynamics of the reproduction of gender relations. In this chapter, we now turn our attention specifically to the construction and experience of gendered youth transitions as revealed through the longitudinal data collected between 1984 and 1986 for the follow-through interview sample. We begin immediately below by recalling the nature of this sample and describing how the data was used in the analysis. The first section then arranges the girls into sub-groups. By examining the course of their educational and gender location 'careers', it is possible to see girls as relatively favourably or unfavourably placed as they approach either option choice at 14 (the younger girls) or the end of compulsory schooling at 16 (the older girls). The following sections are centred around a series of case-studies and their discussion. The focus of these case studies is turned towards processes of educational-occupational choice and placement as these unfold in the girls' own accounts. The discussions consider the ways in which gender-specific educational-occupational channelling is experienced, realised and resisted by girls positioned differently within the field of gender discourse.

Table 3.2 (p. 98) shows how the follow-through sample (N = 37) was drawn to include a range of gender locations (if possible, across schools). In other words, the sampling selected theoretical positions, *not* a smaller-scale replica of the initial sample. Table 6.1 (overleaf) summarises the data which had resulted by 1986 and how it was subsequently used in analysis. (1) This chapter thus makes use of a three year sequence of interview data from 25 girls (12 younger, 13 older). The 12 younger

girls moved from the beginning of their secondary schooling career through to making their option choices. The 13 older girls were followed from the spring of their third year at secondary school (and hence having just made their option choices) through to the spring of their fifth year, when they were contemplating upcoming 16+ examinations and transfer onto the training/labour market or into post compulsory education. The combination of a number of factors (sample loss, gender location distribution across schools, logic of analysis process) means that the 25 respondents are not spread equally across the three schools and the two age-groups. They are, however, spread approximately equally across the 1984 initial allocations to gender locations (on the basis of the first interview). (2)

Table 6.1 : The follow-through interview sample :  
data and usage (N)

| Age-group       | Original sample | Sample loss | Complete data | Fully analysed |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|
| Younger (11-14) | 19              | 2           | 17            | 10+2*          |
| Older (14-16)   | 18              | 3           | 15            | 13             |
| Totals          | 37              | 5           | 32            | 23+2*          |

\*Two further Sternrise cases were later added into the follow-through sample

Notes

1. Complete data = three interviews, conducted annually in 1984, 1985, and 1986.

2. Fully analysed = those cases for whom trajectories were prepared from a detailed analysis of all three interviews.

### 6.1 *Unfolding transitions : patterns and trajectories*

On the basis of the 1984 interview analysis in Chapter 4, we can define gender locations as more or less favourably structured for approaching and negotiating transitions. For the purposes of the analysis which now follows, I have accordingly divided the field mapped by the gender locations into two broad categories : the

'stronger' and 'weaker' sectors. This division crudely represents the extent to which critical consciousness is present (or at least is revealed in interview). The terms 'weak' and 'strong' are thus used as abbreviations for relatively weak/strong critical consciousness. In the 'weaker' sector (which, in this study, covers the preconsciousness, fatalism and avoidance locations), understandings of and explanations for gender divisions do not take a consciously reflective and critical character. Girls in these three locations have fewer social, educational and cultural resources at their disposal which could support them in struggle with and resistance to the social reproduction of gender relations. Of these so-termed weak locations, it is *avoidance* which is the least stable in character; it is therefore the location which is potentially the most transformative of the three. In the 'stronger' sector (here, marginality, codebending, struggle and cultural apprenticeship), perspectives on gender divisions *do* include varying measures of critical consciousness. Girls in these four locations have relatively more resources for resistance and challenge, though of differing kinds and quite variable amounts. Of these strong locations, then, it is cultural apprenticeship which is the most stable in character - and thus the least potentially transformative of the four. The non-transforming resolution of cultural apprenticeship is defined by a specific form of critical consciousness - in which gender relations are relevant but are subsumed under class relations. This reminds us of an important point about non-transforming *resolutions* in general, or to use another term, accommodatory arrangements with the wider social formation. They do *not* imply a lack of critical consciousness, nor a passive acceptance of the status quo; they rather represent ways in which people *strike bargains with* the material and ideological conditions of their particular social existence.

As we shall see further below, broadly speaking, those girls who were allocated to weak locations in 1984 (i.e. at first interview) were unlikely to have shifted into strong locations by 1986 (i.e. at third interview), although this does not mean that

they did not shift at all in the interim. Those girls who had been allocated to strong locations in 1984 either remained there, or they shifted closer towards the weaker sector of gender discourse.

We can describe the girls' accounts of their careers over the course of the three interviews as *transition biographies*. These also take various forms as the girls move from primary transfer, across the option choice threshold and on to the 16+ divide. I decided to allocate the girls' transition biographies into four categories which incorporate both my assessment of the quality of their prospects and the girls' ages during the period of study. It is self-evident that the outcomes of 16+ transitions become increasingly foreseeable the older the girls are. Hence it is the younger girls, moving from primary transfer to option choice between 1984-6, who were allocated either to the *endangered* transitions or to the *promising* transitions categories. The older girls were divided between the *vulnerable* transitions and *well-managed* transitions categories, having moved from option choice in 1984 to the 16+ divide in 1986. There are, however, three respondents in the younger group whose prospects seemed so very unfavourable that they were placed into the 'vulnerable transitions' category along with older girls.

Girls in the *vulnerable* and *endangered* transitions categories are those who, over the three years of the study, experience poor and deteriorating prospects at school and (in all but the three cases noted above) approaching the 16+ divide. Girls in the *promising* and *well-managed* categories are those who, in contrast, experience favourable and improving prospects. These judgements are not made on the basis of some externally set standard of achievement or emancipation. Girls in the three weak gender locations (preconsciousness, fatalism, avoidance) are unlikely to be actively challenging the terms of gender discourse across educational-occupational transitions. They nevertheless secure differentially favourable prospects within the

'gender-conventional' range (of jobs and educational options) and in relation to their social and educational contexts. Girls in the four strong gender locations (marginality, codebending, struggle, cultural apprenticeship) may or may not be moving towards less 'gender-conventional' ways of life. For example, those girls located in cultural apprenticeship are unlikely to be considering occupations and work lives which are unconventional in gender terms, but their perspectives on gender divisions incorporate a critical consciousness which could challenge the terms of gender discourse from within the family. Those girls located in marginality are, on the other hand, rather more likely than others to be pushing against the boundaries of occupational gender divisions in constructing the course of their future lives. How far such girls can 'hold the line' on their hopes and plans as they move into further/higher education, the labour market and adult private/family life is another question, and one which this study cannot answer.

Using the distinctions between weak/strong locations and types of transition biography discussed above, Table 6.2 (overleaf) now shows the association between gender locations and transitions biographies for the 25 follow-through respondents included in this analysis. Weakly-located girls are very likely to find themselves on unfavourable transitions courses. Strongly-located girls are more likely to find themselves on favourable transitions courses, *but not to the same extent* as the weakly located girls are likely to be unfavourably placed. This is exactly what we would expect on the assumption that educational-occupational channelling processes operate through persistent culling. Once having been caught up in the net, it proves extremely difficult to escape again; but it also becomes increasingly difficult *not* to be caught. To use another metaphor : the dice are progressively loaded, the outcomes increasingly skewed. Sociologists are long accustomed to thinking about class-based inequalities in this way. They are less inclined to apply similar perspectives to gender-based inequalities as a *starting-point* for analysis (rather than as a

secondary variable). The many factors which contribute to the direction taken by individual transition biographies can be illustrated most vividly through the empirical examples in section 6.2. To place these case studies into a systematic context, however, I first want to turn to examining the ways in which girls' gender locations changed or remained stable across the three interviews, linking these patterns to the transition biography categories and to educational context.

Table 6.2 : The relationship between gender locations and transition biographies (N)

| Form of educational-occupational transitions biography | 1984-6<br>Weak locations* | 1984-6<br>Strong locations |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Vulnerable</b>                                      | 9                         | 2                          |
| <b>Endangered</b>                                      | 2                         | 2                          |
| <b>Promising</b>                                       | 0                         | 5                          |
| <b>Well-managed</b>                                    | 3                         | 2                          |
| <b>Totals</b>                                          | 14                        | 11                         |

\* Includes those respondents who had been allocated to strong locations in 1984 but had shifted into weak locations by 1986

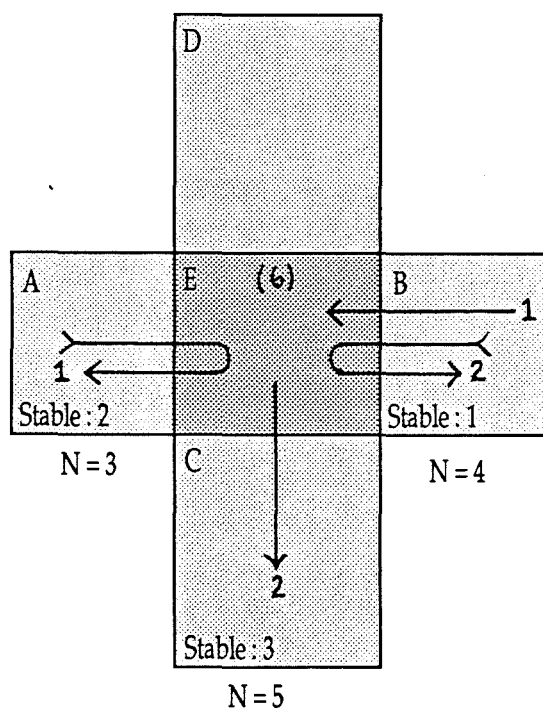
We should here pause to recall just what is here implied by moving (or not moving) between gender locations (as previously discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.3.3). Individuals can, in principle, move through gender discourse in all directions, but in doing so they must pass through transitional space (perhaps more than once). We have identified two locations within this space (avoidance, struggle), and we have seen that there may be particular background characteristics (minority race/ethnicity, class-'ambiguous') which are associated with these. From this perspective, tensioned engagement with the terms of gender discourse is what defines transitional space. Here, explanations for the patterns and experiences of gender relations

compete *both* amongst themselves *and* for priority over against other lines of social cleavage. Girls may confront these conflicts more openly (as in the 'struggle' location) or less openly (as in the 'avoidance' location).

Individuals located elsewhere in gender discourse (at any one point in time) may or may not engage in critical reflection of gender divisions, and their explanations of gender relations may be more or less congruent, but they have adopted (for the moment) a primary explanatory framework. Girls located in preconsciousness 'explain' by simple pattern description. Girls located in fatalism explain those patterns by reference to the 'separate and unequal' principle of gender relations, an essentially *collectivist* perspective which accepts male superiority and authority. Girls located in both marginality and codebending critically reflect (in differing ways) upon gender divisions, applying the equal opportunities principle within the framework of social progress to explain why patterns are changing. They see themselves as agents of social change in this respect, but *as individuals*, not as part of a collective movement. Girls who are located in cultural apprenticeship explain gender divisions by reference to the principle of 'separate and equal', again a *collectivist* perspective whose potentially transformative power is held in check by the stronger collectivism of class solidarity. Girls located in instrumentality and neo-conventionality have reached (for the moment) an *individual* accommodation to the terms of gender discourse by settling for a legitimated resolution to structured contradictions, which does not exclude continued critical reflection upon the status quo of gender divisions.

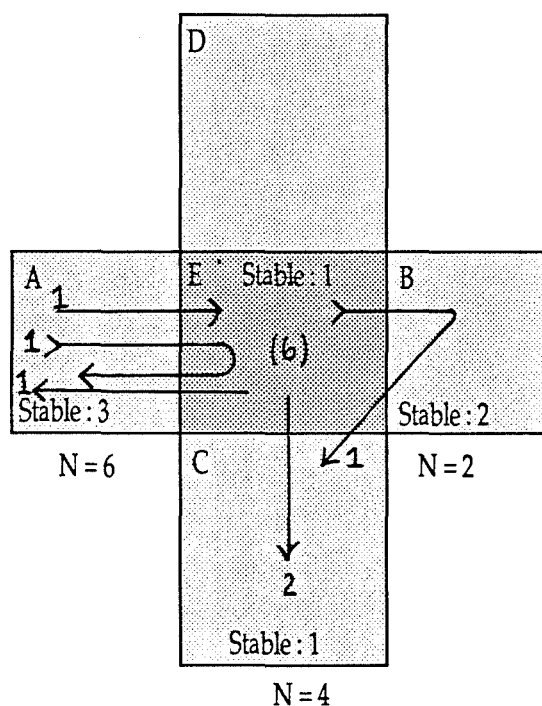
Figure 6.1 (overleaf) now charts the 1984-6 gender location trajectories of the 25 girls included in this analysis. (3) To reduce the visual complexity, the individual trajectories are collapsed into groups to show movements between the major sub-fields of the model (as described in Chapter 2, section 2.3.2 and Figure 2.3 on p.78 ).

## 11-14 YEAR OLDS : THE YOUNGER GROUP



Total N cases : 12

## 14-16 YEAR OLDS : THE OLDER GROUP



Total N cases : 13

Key

- A : non transforming positions (preconsciousness, fatalism)
- B : potentially transforming positions (marginality, codebending)
- C : non-transforming resolutions (cult apprenticeship, instrumentality, neo-conventionality)
- D : potentially transforming resolutions (?)
- E : transitional locations (avoidance, struggle)

Numbers adjacent to the arrows show the number of cases falling into this pattern; numbers in brackets indicate the number of cases allocated to transitional locations at one or more of the three interviews; 'stable' indicates the number of cases which did not shift location/sector across the three interviews. The total number of cases in sectors A, B and C plus stable cases from sector E give the total number of follow through respondents drawn into this analysis (12 + 13 = 25)

Figure 6.1 Gender location trajectories 1984-6



In other words, Figure 6.1 collates and depicts movements into and out of non-transforming positions (preconsciousness, fatalism), potentially transforming positions (marginality, codebending), transitional locations (avoidance, struggle) and non-transforming resolutions (cultural apprenticeship, instrumentality, neo-conventionality).

On the whole, this aspect of the analysis is, in itself, not the most fruitful, but it does provide a basis for moving further, i.e., it acts as an interim stage of clarification. If we assess the patterns shown in Figure 6.1 in terms of types of shift (as described in Chapter 2, section 2.3.3 and Figure 2.4 on p.86), we can note three features. Firstly, girls do not generally move directly between individual gender locations outside transitional space (Type IV shift). Secondly, movement solely within transitional space itself (Type III shift) does not occur either. Thirdly, individual trajectories are more likely to express movements into and out of transitional space (Types I, II and V shifts). We can summarise the 25 trajectories by concluding that the respondents broadly split into two groups : *either* girls' gender location remains stable (i.e. each interview resulted in allocation to the same gender location), *or* girls pursue three-stage trajectories (i.e. in which at least two different gender locations are represented across the sequence of three interviews). Table 6.3 ( below) recasts the information

Table 6.3 :Types of shift by age-group

| Age-group      | Stable location<br>1984-6 | Small-scale shift<br>Types I, II, IV | Extended /complex shift<br>Type V (includes III) |
|----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Younger(11-14) | 5                         | 3                                    | 4                                                |
| Older (14-16)  | 6                         | 2                                    | 5                                                |
| Totals         | 11                        | 5                                    | 9                                                |

in Figure 6.1 accordingly. As Table 6.3 shows, the 1984-6 three interview sequence did not register any shift for 11 of the 25 girls. (4) The interviews did not detect movement, then, for almost half of the sample. Table 6.3 divides those girls who did change gender location across the period of study into two sub-groups: those whose trajectories showed small-scale shift ( $N = 5$ ) and extended/complex shift ( $N = 9$ ). As noted earlier, the sample as a whole is inclined to polarise into those girls who remained stable and those whose trajectories were extended, and this trend is slightly more marked for the older group than for the younger group. It is impossible to decide what significance this tendency might hold given the nature and the size of the follow-through sample. Either cohort or age-stage differences, or both, might play a role, but chance is equally as plausible an explanation. (5)

It remains the case that the overall polarisation in the trajectory patterns suggests a gradual process of separation over time into two groups of respondents. On the one hand, there are those who have reached a particular form of consciousness about gender divisions by (at the latest) the age of 14. In other words, these girls have reached (or have not yet departed from) a stability of perspective. On the other hand, there are those who embark on and continue with a process of active and critical engagement with gender discourse, thereby producing more extended and complex trajectories over time. Where these trajectories begin, the directions in which they move, and their (only provisional) end-points, are framed by the background and emergent resources with which girls are equipped and can draw upon in primary and secondary habitus contexts. This process of engagement does not, of course, necessarily extend over the whole course of secondary schooling; neither does it end at 16. However, option choice at 14, a deeply gendered educational-occupational threshold, is an institutional mechanism for setting critical turning-points in the course of transition biographies. For some girls, option choice marks *closure*: a course has been taken, and the aim will be to negotiate it successfully. For others, it

marks *continued openness*, but with a range of possible outcomes. Only for a very few girls in this study could option choice be said to mark continued openness in this way, and they were all located in potentially transforming positions (i.e. in marginality or codebending).

The next question to address is whether simply *moving* between gender locations is in itself associated with the direction taken by transition biographies. Table 6.4 (below) returns to the three-fold typology of shift used in Table 6.3 (on p.229), setting it against a two-fold typology of transition biography. Here, vulnerable/endangered transitions are opposed to well-managed/promising transitions to give a basis for comparison between cells (having in total 25 cases).

Table 6.4 : Types of shift by types of transitions biography

| Age-group                   | Stable location<br>1984-6 | Small-scale shift<br>Types I, II, IV | Extended/complex shift<br>Type V (includes III) |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Vulnerable &<br>Endangered  | 5                         | 3                                    | 7                                               |
| Well-managed &<br>Promising | 6                         | 2                                    | 2                                               |
| Totals                      | 11                        | 5                                    | 9                                               |

The distribution in Table 6.4 indicates, firstly, that stability *per se* is not associated with unfavourable transitions prospects. The eleven girls who did not change their gender location between 1984-6 are equally split between those facing poor and favourable transition prospects. On the other hand, looking behind the data in Table 6.4, four of the five 'stable' girls who do face poor prospects were allocated to what we earlier described as weak gender locations (preconsciousness, fatalism and avoidance). Zoe (3/21, see pp.241-2) is the exception. In this case, it is the lack of

congruence between Zoe's firmly-fixed aspirations to enter acting and the academicist milieu of Sternrise's A-stream which unseats the course of her transitions biography. Zoe is too determined and autonomous in her approach to schooling to relinquish her hopes in favour of conformity to the school's values, and her parents are prevaricating at best in their support for her plans.

Similarly, five of the six 'stable' girls with *favourable* prospects are more 'strongly' located in gender discourse. Here, it is Mandy (3/30) who is the exception. In the B-stream at Sedgehill, she had always wanted to be a secretary, like her elder sister, now married with three children and with no intention ever to return to employment. Mandy was attached to her sister and explicitly hoped her life would unfold in the same way. Mandy looked forward to marriage and children; she expected and wanted to be responsible for the housework and childcare. She took gender divisions in both production and reproduction for granted, on the basis of inherent gendered talents, attributes and interests. My notes from the third interview are suggestive of parallels with Melissa (3/3, see pp.263-5):

Mandy came....neatly and fashionably dressed but well within school uniform rules, e.g. her jumper was chunky and baggy but the right colour and style.....She was modestly made-up, including her eyes, despite the fact that she was still recovering from an eye infection which had kept her away from school the previous week. Her carefully cut hair was freshly washed and blown dry. Mandy said she thinks appearance important and feels odd going out of the house not made-up. She washes her hair nearly every day and gets up an hour earlier each morning so she has enough time to get ready. One would probably describe Mandy as a modestly attractive girl, conscious of fashion but careful of its display, well-mannered and demure.

Mandy clearly identified strongly with the culture of femininity in all its aspects : caring, attractiveness, service, and respectability. She aspired to a secretarial-receptionist job in the City, which she saw as glamorous and high-status: "You'd feel high, there's a lot of important people up there." Mandy was conscious of status

distinctions at school, too. She did not regard herself as particularly talented, and felt uncomfortable in those options which combined teaching groups destined for CSE and O-level : "They seem a lot higher up, they're higher....It's because I know they can get better grades than me, I can't do O-level." In a school like Sternrise, pupils are inevitably sharply aware of these hierarchies. However, Mandy accepted these status distinctions in much the same way as she accepted gendered hierarchies, so that she was satisfied to be doing well at her level. Mandy consistently sought, and certainly received, affirmation by fulfilling normative expectations of female and pupil behaviour : she was quiet and well-mannered, she strove to do her best at school, and she planned to stay on into the sixth form for a year to take a typing/business studies course before looking for a job. If necessary, she would go on to FE college afterwards to extend her qualifications. At 16, she looked back with considerable satisfaction on the decisions she had taken and the progress she had made thus far, and looked forward with quiet confidence to a conventionally structured future, in much the same way as Melissa did. (6)

Returning to the data in Table 6.4, a further notable feature is that *seven* of the nine girls with extended/complex trajectories also face unfavourable transitions prospects. Looking behind the data in the table once more, five of these seven girls were more 'strongly' located within gender discourse *for at least part of* the period covered by the study. In other words, it is in this cell that we can pinpoint those girls who are most clearly struggling hard and (potentially) losing. Yvonne (3/1), Lorraine (3/14) and Vivienne (3/21) fall into this group, and they are drawn into the concluding discussion of this chapter.

The final dimension of gender location trajectories I want to highlight is that of educational context. In Chapter 3 we saw that pupil social origin profiles in the three study schools differ. Similarly, the distribution of the 1984 interview respondents

across gender locations also varies by school (as we saw in Chapter 4). In sum, socially and in terms of gender discourse, Wilhelma girls are more weakly located, Sternrise girls are more strongly located, and Dame's Trust girls are somewhat more scattered on both counts, but are more like Wilhelma girls than like Sternrise girls. Clearly social origins, in the broader sense of primary habitus, prefigure gender location patterns to some extent. The analysis reported in Chapter 4 found social origins, in this wider sense, to be an element of the defining features of the gender locations identified in this study. That the three schools themselves constitute differing educational milieux is equally evident (see Chapter 3, section 3.2). The question here, then, is whether the follow-through study can suggest how girls' gender location trajectories and their transitions biographies link up with specific educational experience as represented by the three schools they attended.

Firstly, it would appear that Wilhelma is an educational environment which positively assists few girls *either* to construct favourable transition prospects *or* to develop critical consciousness of gender divisions. The girls who come to Wilhelma are likely to come from particularly poorly-placed working class fractions, and they are less likely to arrive equipped with the resources to challenge the terms of gender discourse. The school makes relatively little impact in fostering the girls' talents in a formal educational sense, nor does it provide the kind of social learning environment which girls find attractive.

On the contrary, the girls from Wilhelma were virtually unanimous in their condemnation of the school's atmosphere, inside and beyond the classroom. They certainly criticised many teachers' inability to establish a productive working environment as they saw it, but in fact it was the *boys'* frequently abominable behaviour which teachers found beyond them. The long-term presence of the research project team in the schools and our periodic involvement in classroom life

unequivocally confirmed the girls' views. It was also the case that some (not all) male teachers employed domineering and aggressive techniques of control with pupils, behaviours which many of the boys displayed in their own ways too. Many women teachers and support staff were threatened, both professionally and personally, by this atmosphere; in response, during 1986 they formed a women's group. The curriculum intervention which formed a major aspect of the research project from which this study is drawn did succeed, in a small way, in fostering support systems for the girls involved, who did then begin to reflect more critically on their situation (cf. Chisholm & Holland, 1987). However, these were tiny islands of support in a very stormy sea, in no way amending the dominant milieu (and none of the girls in the interview study were in the curriculum intervention classes). Wilhelma girls were very much inclined to experience option choice with relief, not only because they could dispense with at least some of the subjects they disliked or found difficult, but because for the last two years many of their teaching groups would be populated wholly or largely by girls.

Given all these factors, and bearing in mind the severely depressed local economy, it is not surprising to find that only two of the eight Wilhelma girls' transitions prospects looked relatively positive. The first of these is Melissa (3/3, case study pp.263-5). She was able to make the most of Wilhelma by quiet conformity and judicious use of established informal channels of access to 'real' jobs. Bridget (1/3, discussed briefly in Chapter 4, section 4.4 pp.179-80 ) is the second of the two. Located in cultural apprenticeship, Bridget did not depend upon the school for resources and assistance in constructing and negotiating transitions. She had always intended to follow her sister's example and enter routine office-work, and she had never felt particularly drawn to schooling. She judged herself to be quite able, for she could always catch up on her work when necessary, which was often, because of frequent illness (judged by her teachers, not wholly inaccurately, as malingering).

Bridget drew on her parents and siblings for advice and information, not the school. They encouraged her to equip herself with future-oriented qualifications, especially in computing studies (by which they and she mean word-processing skills). They also actively supported her in her many run-ins with teachers over late or lost homework, her refusal to do PE or art, and her demand to be excused science altogether on the grounds of her hay-fever! In 1986, Bridget had realised she would be obliged to continue with a science through to 16, but was confidently convinced she would "find a way round it." She had blithely forgotten the details of what she had recently chosen for her options, but only because schooling was of little salience to her. Bridget intended to secure the exam passes she needed in office studies and computer studies, in maths and in English, and then go on to FE college to take more of the same until she found the kind of job her sister had "...in a nice cushy little office with central heating, in the summer with the windows open, sitting at a desk typing....I'd spend all my money on clothes!"

In marked contrast to Wilhelma, Sternrise offers an educational environment which differentially privileges those girls who already come to the school equipped with a range of useful social and cultural resources. Girls who are placed in the A-stream forms are at risk of gradual disengagement and disaffection when they do not (or cannot) choose to assimilate to the individualist, academic, competitive culture the school fosters and expects from A-stream pupils. Zoe (3.21, case study pp.241-2, pp.231-2), our thwarted actress, falls into this category; so does Vivienne (3/23, see Chapter 4 and in section 6.6 of this chapter). With a vulnerable transitions biography *and* an extended gender location trajectory, Vivienne is a spectacular example of the 'struggling and losing' group identified earlier ( cf. p.233). Belinda's (1/24, case study pp.250-52) increasing awareness of the school culture to which she is expected to assimilate similarly points to a lack of congruence between it and the values and resources she brings with her from her home and community. These girls' situations



are quite different from those of Amy (1/26, case study pp.255-7 and contrasted with Bridget (1/3) in Chapter 4, section 4.4) and Frances (1/25, see Chapter 4, section 4.2.5 and section 6.6 of this chapter), who both come from achieved middle class backgrounds.

Dame's Trust once more seems to combine features of both Wilhelma and Sternrise. Those girls who were weakly located to start with remained so; their transition prospects, as for Wilhelma girls, were generally unfavourable. However, for those girls more 'strongly' located, relatively favourable transitions prospects are differently accented than they are at Sternrise or at Wilhelma. Aspects of teacher-pupil relations and the classroom climate were also expressed as unsatisfactory by Dame's Trust girls. They differentiated between teachers who could provide a productive learning atmosphere through classroom control, and those who could not. This concern became marked, however, after option choice, because of the sharp distinction between 'serious' and 'sink' subjects and teaching groups. Overt disaffection at Dame's Trust surfaced strongly in the 'reshuffled' fourth year teaching groups; the results subsided only during the spring term of the fifth year, as the most disaffected girls left on turning sixteen. (7) There is a sense in which Dame's Trust did not 'connect' with its pupils, a feature which was very evident in the case of Miriam (3/15, case study pp.240-41). Neither, however, did it (any longer) inspire confidence as an academic setting, as expressed in Eleanor's (3/10, case study pp.266-7) decision to transfer to FE college for A-levels. At Sternrise girls either left into employment at 16 or stayed on into the sixth form; at Wilhelma girls mainly left into (un)employment at 16, and a few went to college. At Dame's Trust, girls who intended to continue some form of education beyond 16 were likely to transfer to college rather than to stay at the school. In that Dame's Trust, on the whole, is probably a rather more 'neutral' educational milieu than either Sternrise or Wilhelma, the contribution of primary habitus features in shaping transitions biographies

comes across in sharper relief. The strong support for educational achievement and women's independence in Justine's (3/13, discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.2.5) family is an example of this. Such influences come across all the more clearly precisely because of the relatively 'paler' contribution of the school.

## 6.2 *Vulnerable transitions : case studies*

Nine of the eleven girls who experience poor and deteriorating prospects at school and at 16+ were allocated to weak gender locations throughout the study. The four cases described here are illustrative of the *range of routes* which lead to and express particular vulnerabilities in negotiating transitions critical to the social reproduction of gender relations.

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### Case 1/2 : Maxine : Wilhelma School

Maxine seemed well-settled in the locality after moving down from Manchester with her family six years previous. Her best friend, who lives near her, was in the same class, and she talked eagerly about pottery lessons and Integrated Studies, in which they were doing a project on Roman London. She had several pets and was looking forward to training and grooming her dog for shows, so she thought she'd like to become a dog handler. The family visited their relatives in the North regularly, where her uncle and aunt were employed catching stray dogs. From her elder siblings' experiences Maxine knew that getting jobs isn't easy. She already had the idea that job searching involved going round places and asking, alternatively that jobs somehow turned up :

My sister's friend came and knocked for her, they had nothing to do so they went looking for jobs. She knows this boy and he said he'd give her a job at the end of March. (1/2/1)

A boy round our way was just hanging around the building site, and a bloke just came up to him, the boss, they were putting windows in, just asked him if he wanted a painting job, so he went along and tried it, £15 a day he got. He's packed it in now. (1/2/2)

By the spring of her second year Maxine was already disillusioned with school. The family's regular weekend trips north on the Nightrider trains meant Maxine started the week tired and sometimes missed a day. She had some difficulties with schoolwork, especially maths, science and French. Her mother agreed with Maxine's view that there's no point in learning foreign languages "when you're hardly going to go there...I wouldn't go [to France] anyway, I don't like it." She had mixed feelings about being in a withdrawal support group for maths - it took her away from her friends, but she worked better in the quieter atmosphere. She still enjoyed art, drama

and computing studies. But on the whole Maxine saw little purpose in schooling : "it's all stupid." A year later her disaffection had deepened; Maxine would have preferred to stay at home altogether. Her difficulties with schoolwork had not eased, and she found the atmosphere at Wilhelma unsettling - especially the boys' noisiness and unpleasantness to the girls. She had asked to transfer to a "uniform school", but her mother took the view it was too late and that one had to have a reasonable excuse. Although Maxine had only recently selected her options for the coming two years, she could not recall what they were. Eventually she remembered she would be taking biology (as her compulsory science option) and "something to do with accounts and offices" to give her a fall-back on the labour market. Neither of her parents came to the options evening - her mother had said she was too busy; she had not expected her father to come anyway. Maxine had asked her mother and her teacher for advice on what to choose, but she had not experienced their responses as positively helpful. Otherwise, she had not discussed her future with anyone, nor they with her. No-one Maxine knew intends to stay on after 16, including herself: "anyone who does is mad." Maxine still wants to work with animals, but she has no idea what sorts of jobs might be available or how she might go about getting them.

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### Case 3/19 : Penny : Dame's Trust School

Penny's mother had wanted to become a hairdresser but now works as a factory machinist. From the beginning she made it very clear to Penny that she did not want her daughter to go into this kind of work - a dirty job - and strongly pushed her towards becoming a typist. Throughout the period of the study, however, Penny claimed she wanted to become a hairdresser too, and that she had no interest in office work. Underneath the surface, Penny was actually interested in building, painting/decorating, and even, at one stage, engineering. Her father was employed in construction, and she had asked him to show her how to hang wallpaper once "but I got it all wrong." She had discarded any thoughts of pursuing her interests almost as soon as they emerged; her father would laugh at her were she to suggest it, and "I'd feel the odd person out with all those men around you, they'd say I was doing it all wrong anyway." Right through to the spring of her fifth year Penny said she had decided to be a hairdresser, but still wished she could try painting/decorating, concluding that she really didn't know what she wanted to be. By that time she had not yet managed to find a salon apprenticeship, nor even the Saturday job she hoped might give her a chance of getting one. She had not sought assistance from careers staff inside or beyond the school, and had missed her careers interview altogether. Certainly she had firmly rejected the alternative of doing a college course in hairdressing instead; she could not bear the idea of any more formal education/training. Penny had moved to Dame's Trust after first attending a co-educational school because she had got fed-up with the boys' disruptive behaviour; things were going reasonably well at school through to the spring of 1985, when she was in her fourth year. She had chosen games, history (her then favourite subject), German (which she subsequently found increasingly difficult), Science at Work and needlework for her options. Things suddenly started going downhill; Penny lost interest in all her subjects except for English and maths, so she started truanting. By spring 1986 she said she was hardly in school at all, commenting that "as soon as I walk in the school gate I think I'm in prison." She had no-one with whom she could talk about the problem. Her parents had threatened her that she would be "put away" and sent to a special school if the truanting continued, but to no effect. Yet Penny knew she could have done better than she had, expecting to regret it all when she was older, and was proud of having got top marks in her needlework mock exam. She was due to take five CSEs that

summer. She could not wait to leave, but her job prospects were poor. Her mother, Penny's only source of advice in this direction, had put considerable effort into trying to find her various jobs in offices and shops, but had in desperation finally agreed to get her into the factory where she herself works. Penny herself hoped this would be temporary until she got a "proper job", but remained unprepared to commit herself to seeking anything else - because, of course, the jobs she felt were appropriate were not the jobs she actually wanted; and the ones she really wanted, she knew were "not for girls." Her expectation was that she will remain in the factory :

That's what my mother did. In the school holidays she used to go and work with my Nan in the factory, and when she left she went out looking for a proper job and couldn't find one so she ended up doing machining all the time. (3/19/3)

### **Case 3/15 : Miriam : Dame's Trust School**

In 1984 Miriam had opted for German and Bengali with an eye on her hopes to become an interpreter or a languages teacher. However, she had only added Bengali after it was clear there would not be a viable teaching group for Religious Education, her first choice in that option 'box' at Dame's Trust. Her other options (drama, biology and textiles) were similarly chosen as the least unattractive of the alternatives available. Miriam had never settled down at her secondary school; she had found primary school freer and the teachers kinder. At Dame's Trust she resented the control exercised by teachers over pupils, and found the lessons dry. She had gained a reputation for talking and misbehaving in lessons early on, but underneath the surface Miriam was quite keen to do well, readily blaming herself for being lazy and badly-behaved. She described herself as shy, like her mother; whereas she was resentful of her father, who made fun of her sensitivities. Both parents would like her to do well at school; her father was particularly insistent, attributing his difficulties in getting on to his lack of education and qualifications. However, it was her mother with whom she discussed her option choices; and she did not consult teachers at all. A year later, Miriam was finding school less boring than before, so felt things were going rather well; she liked all her lessons except for biology (because she disliked dissection). At the same time she'd been "told off" several times at school, because the teachers saw her as a lazy underachiever. Whilst Miriam agreed she could be lazy unless pushed hard, she judged herself as unable to cope with O-levels and expected to be taking "second-class" exams, i.e. CSEs, the following year. She was still holding on to the idea of becoming an interpreter, but had begun to think about working with children instead; the difficulty was that the things she might be interested in all seemed to require more studying than she thought she wanted to or could undertake. Her only discussion partners remained her parents, whose main worry was that she would leave school into unemployment at 16+. So Miriam was unenthusiastically considering staying on into the sixth form to do a business studies course (to give her fall-back secretarial skills); she expected she'd have to improve her 16+ exam grades anyway. In spring 1986 the same clouds had regrouped and thickened on Miriam's horizon - under pressure from her father and from her teachers for underachieving, struggling against strong antipathy towards her subjects and teachers, yet dearly wanting to do well. "I've always said I want just to get one A-level, any one, to show I can do it." She felt paralysed by the pressure to achieve, had chosen altogether the wrong options, and had done badly in her mocks. She was to take 6 CSEs in the summer and return to school in the autumn. Her parents were determined she should get some qualifications, and Miriam herself didn't feel herself

mature enough to go out to work. But she would never consider transferring to FE college instead : "the people I know who've gone to college all turn out freaky! Weird!" Miriam had now firmly decided she wanted to teach deaf children or something similar, but had been dismayed to discover this too meant going to college. When she talked to the careers officer about the idea, her advice had been to suggest an FE community care course so that she could get a job caring for handicapped children. Miriam remained at a loss to know what she wanted to do.

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### Case 3/21 : Zoe : Sternrise School

At 14, Zoe had been very confident that she could achieve her aspiration to become an actress (and if not, then a drama teacher) and was determined that her school should provide her with the education she wanted. She had just chosen her options (drama, music, chemistry, geography and RE) and was in the middle of a clinch with the Head. Zoe's name had inexplicably been left off the list for drama, her most important subject as far as she was concerned, but she had been told that there was now nothing that could be done, she would have to choose another option. She was also under pressure to switch from chemistry to another science in order to ease the timetabling problems. Neither Zoe nor her parents were prepared to give in :

My Dad said the Head's the one who's mucked up your options so he's the one who's going to have to straighten it out for you...When I told my Dad he said "I'll come up to the school then if you can't get in"...There's no way I'm moving out of my subjects...

When I 'phoned my Mum and told her she said "Right, I'm coming up to the school if they don't let you choose, they shouldn't offer the subjects if you can't do them." (3/21/1)

Zoe got her way. She had also originally thought of taking Child Development or Home Economics, but had decided that this would make her options seem too "soft"; Zoe was in an A stream class, and teachers were important sources of academic and vocational motivation to her. On the other hand, her preference would have been to transfer to a drama school from the end of her third year. Her father had prevaricated, suggesting she wait a while before taking such an irrevocable decision. Zoe's gradual feeling that her schooling was proving an obstacle rather than a facilitator in what she felt was a firm occupational aspiration took root around this time. By the spring of her fourth year she was not enjoying her options, sure that not transferring to drama school until 16+ was placing her at a disadvantage. She saw her father as supportive of her acting hopes; but her mother was more anxious, suggesting Zoe should take up typing as a fall-back - an idea to which she was wholly opposed. She and her friend were pursuing their ambitions via an evening children's stage school, going to auditions, and seeking out careers information - but it was very much an uphill struggle, with everyone emphasising the gloomy prospects. In the meantime, Zoe had found it impossible to keep up in her O-level music group as she could not play an instrument or read music, so she had changed to Law. Finding chemistry hard going, she had switched to geology. A year later matters had deteriorated still further; Zoe had wholly disengaged from schooling except in so far as she could study drama and gain confidence/maturity before launching into acting - but she blamed herself for not having taken her schoolwork seriously enough. At the beginning of her fourth year she had been placed in O-level groups for all her subjects; now she would be sitting CSEs in everything except

Drama and Law, and would be taking no exam in geology. Zoe wished she had followed her original inclinations and taken Child Development or Home Economics instead - they would have been both easier and more enjoyable. She was in a quandary about what to do after the summer, having just realised that if she wanted to return into the sixth form she'd have to build a full timetable rather than simply coming in for Drama A-level. Her parents, who hoped she would stay on, do A-levels, and forget about acting, could offer her little assistance; the school Zoe regarded as hopeless as a source of advice for girls like herself. She and her friend had stopped going to their evening class, where they felt marginalised. She was quite sure she did not want to follow a standard sixth form A-level curriculum; yet felt she was not ready to move into acting either. Zoe now rated her chances of achieving her aspirations as "pretty slim" and contemplated her future with unease:

If I leave school I know I've got a job - my Dad works for [a credit card company]....and he says he could get me a job filing....If the worst comes to the worst I might do it. But the reason I'm staying on at school is because although I know what I want to do, I don't think I'm ready to go out yet...So now I don't know what to do...When I told my parents I would stay on they were really pleased, said it was very wise...I think they got carried away...then I said no, I might do A-level drama...but that's all...I told them I didn't think I'd be sitting many more exams...They don't mind, they'll back me up whatever I do....So many people have tried to put me off recently

....One [of my friends] was looking at a job vacancy sheet and said she was going for one as a secretary in a bank. I said how could she do something so boring; she said it's not boring, and that she would get somewhere, it was more likely...than I would with acting....My brother is always saying I'll never make it, why don't I just be a secretary or a waitress!...I don't take any notice...[But] in a way I'm frightened. If I do an office job as a fill-in and don't succeed in acting, I'll be stuck with it. (3/21/3)

### 6.2.1 Discussion

In this study, vulnerable transitions biographies share two broad features. Firstly, the relationship between formal education and an individually 'successful' transition to further education, training or employment is fractured long before the close of compulsory schooling approaches. Schooling is constructed around principles and practices which do not recognise or respond to these girls' identities and understandings of their worlds. Secondly, neither school nor family engage with or respond positively to the girls' own attempts to construct their futures in the ways they themselves see as possible and desirable. Teachers, advisors and parents may have tried to do so, of course, but they have not made a positive impact. Maxine,

Penny, Miriam and Zoe lacked, or were denied, the support resources which could have helped them to recognise and pursue what it is they would like and be able to do with their lives. As a result, they became alienated from schooling, their potential was not (fully) tapped, and they were drifting helplessly into a characteristically female labour market vulnerability.

Maxine had little sense at all of what she could or might do, apart from a very vague liking for animals; she saw no relevance in much of the curriculum and had difficulties with her schoolwork anyway, which were further exacerbated by the quality of the learning environment at Wilhelma. Maxine's parents were as disengaged from schooling as she herself was. Teachers were no alternative resource, as part of the environment which Maxine found irrelevant. At best, she would find an office job with the typing skills she was expecting to acquire in her last two years at school. Much more probably, Maxine would be leaving Wilhelma with few or no qualifications into the grey economy or onto the dole.

Miriam was equally unsettled at Dame's Trust, needing more encouragement and affirmation than she had received either from her teachers or her family, and especially not from her father. She had slipped into a vicious circle of bad behaviour in class, underachievement and loss of confidence; the result was merely more pressure to achieve and conform from both home and school. Miriam diffidently dreamed of becoming an interpreter, something of which her downwardly mobile parents would be proud, but the vicious circle continued to obstruct her hopes. Although she did not want to continue in formal education after 16, she could secure no assistance in finding a positive direction, and so had agreed to stay on into the sixth form to do a business studies course. Miriam would probably leave school at 17 and drift into routine office work, like her mother.

Penny had also had a difficult transition to secondary school, but her main problem was that neither her parents nor the school were in a position to recognise and to facilitate her real, but largely unvoiced, interests. Dame's Trust simply did not have the resources to offer a practical craft and technology curriculum across the whole range. As a girls' school, it only had facilities for needlework and domestic science. There was no legitimated space for Penny to begin to acknowledge and explore her interests. When she timidly tried her hand at home, her father laughed at her and she at once lost all confidence. Having herself had little opportunity to do anything but factory machining, Penny's mother was pressuring her to go into office work, in which she had no interest whatsoever. Penny's response to these conflicting pressures was simply to prevaricate about her future, to avoid taking any action at all. She began to escape by truanting; the result was more pressure from all sides, and she quite literally felt trapped. She would leave at 16 with a few CSEs, but she (and her mother) had given up. Penny was going to work in the factory, like her mum.

Zoe was full of pep and determination to become an actress. Her parents hoped she would grow out of it, and at a school like Sternrise, acting is not a legitimated or a facilitated aspiration, especially not for an A-stream girl. Her efforts to use schooling autonomously were frustrated by the school's organisational need to manage its resources within the option choice system efficiently. Zoe's father hedged around her request to transfer to a specialist theatre school. Zoe increasingly felt she was in the wrong place and that she was meeting with obstructions at every turn. She tried to make progress on her own initiative, but with no-one to advise and support her she gained no headway. Her disaffection and resentment with schooling grew, and her achievement began to fall steadily away from the levels expected in the A-stream. Her parents just hoped for the best right through, but in the end Zoe found herself about to take CSEs and wholly at a loss over what she would do the following



year. She was faced with the equally undesirable options of being swallowed up into office work or embarking on a conventional sixth form academic curriculum in order to carry on with acting via A-level drama. Zoe feared, quite accurately, that she was in a very sticky corner with poor prospects for extracting herself.

None of these girls' talents and interests were acknowledged, affirmed and fostered. Miriam and Zoe, both from downwardly mobile backgrounds, aimed at professional level and interesting occupations, but were more likely destined for fairly routine office work. Penny really wanted to go into a skilled construction or technical trade like her father, but ended up in the factory like her mother. Maxine, at 14+, could only think of equipping herself with typing, as a fallback (cf. Chapter 5). She looked to be heading towards casual, lower-level service sector employment at best - again, like her mother, who had once been a cleaner but, with four children and a lorry driver husband working nights, was now a full-time housewife with no plans to return to paid employment.

All four transition biographies were, then, effectively reproducing both gender and class relations; the girls' gender location trajectories express these processes accordingly. Neither Maxine, Penny nor Miriam were in a very favourable position to deconstruct and negotiate the terms of their gendered transitions. Maxine, for example, never moved beyond preconsciousness. Gender divisions were always a taken-for-granted feature of her highly bounded world on the basis of a straightforward observation of the division of labour practised around her. She found it very difficult to cope with questions which asked her to consider hypothetical situations in this regard, e.g. what she might want to do were she a boy, or whether girls who wanted to go into male-typed manual crafts would have any problems getting jobs. For Maxine, the world of production is largely foreign territory populated fundamentally by men, who "get most jobs." Basically women "stay at home and get paid

by their husbands," Here, husbands parallel employers in the world of reproduction.

Penny shifted between fatalism and avoidance. She equally took gender divisions for granted, but unlike Maxine she explicitly recognised that men define the terms. At times Penny voiced a hovering sense of injustice about the domestic division of labour, more strongly for childcare than for housework, but on the whole she accepted the status quo as both inevitable and defensible. Her own parents operated and overtly supported a conventional and sharply demarcated division of labour. When her mother returned to work as a full-time machinist after her youngest child went to school (as Penny entered her fourth year at Dame's Trust), it was Penny who had to step into the domestic labour breach. In the second interview, she complained that her brother, then aged 12, was not expected to help too. His view was that boys do not do such tasks; Penny's response was that he would need to learn how to do housework for when he got married and *his wife wasn't in*. At 16, Penny concluded she would marry even though she feared the prospect of being tied indoors to housework and childcare; by this time, she had wholly re-accepted the inevitability of a conventional division of labour simply because men are wilfully incompetent in the domestic sphere and women are inherently incompetent in a wide range of job-related skills.

Miriam retreated from struggle into avoidance and then settled for neo-conventionality. At 14, her underlying resentment at the devaluation of women's labour accompanied strong identification with a positively-valued femininity represented by her mother, in a family where the gendering of tasks and attributes was highly polarised. Miriam had recognised that her mother had been exploited by working for low and irregular wages in her husband's small firm, and commented that "men still don't respect women even if they are in charge." That her (then) 12 year old brother was favoured at home (whereas she was obliged to "work for rewards")

confirmed her view that women try harder than men do, but are still seen as inferior to men at work : “[People think] they should be at home cooking and things....[but] You’ve still got to have brains for cooking, haven’t you?” Miriam was confronted with contradictory expectations for educational *achievement* and gendered *ascription*; it was her father who strongly pressured her to do well at school, whilst simultaneously demanding her submission to his authority and norms of femininity, just as he treated his wife, who “doesn’t have much choice” in going along with what he says. Despite her insight, at 15 Miriam expected and wanted her future family (by which she meant *mothering*) to constitute the centre of her life : “I can see myself like my mum.” She now viewed herself as incompetent at and utterly disinterested in all male-typed tasks (domestic and occupational); and she wished she were skinny and tall instead of (as she put it) smallish and slightly dumpy. At 16, Miriam had decided that her mother’s oppression in the family was a consequence of her lack of paid employment. Her father did nothing in the house; her brother refused to help on the grounds that housework is a woman’s job. “If I had my mum’s life I wouldn’t like it. No-one ever helps her, she has to do it all herself. My kids’ll help me!” Yet Miriam herself firmly expected to marry, have children before she reached 20 and to be responsible for the domestic labour; she would establish a career first, but happily give it up for her family.

Zoe remained more ‘strongly’ located throughout the period of study, but her case is a good example of how structured contradictions ensnare most teenage girls regardless. Becoming an actress does not, in itself, involve crossing occupational gender boundaries. It may offer spaces to resist and challenge the terms of gender discourse, directly through professional activities, indirectly through personal autonomy and alternative lifestyles. On the other hand, dominant understandings and practices reinforce, at least in the first instance, conventional norms of femininity (appearance, dress, behaviour, etc.). The chances of making a living out of acting are

also rather low; doing office work to survive temporarily can all too readily become permanent, as Zoe knew. She had been very firm from the outset that her career would be very important to her, that marriage and children would not be allowed to interfere with her progress, and that people should not be afraid to challenge gendered expectations either at work or in the family. But would Zoe be likely to have the opportunity to put this into practice? By 1986 she had a steady boyfriend, in the same drama group as herself at school. He would be leaving that summer to join his father's plumbing business. Zoe had lots of friends, who were important to her, but by then she was spending most of her spare time at her boyfriend's house. Would she slide gradually into office work and then marriage, and if so, would she be able to negotiate a division of labour in the family that was to her taste? Everything rather hung in the balance at that point; but it was clear that Zoe was already beginning to experience what she would face in the 'next round of the game.'

As the tape ran out Zoe had begun to fidget and had suppressed a yawn, so I decided not to press her further, but in rounding off the discussion I asked her how she saw her life unfolding. She cannot imagine herself married or with children, and certainly would not centre her life on her family or husband - she'd want to carry on working and would not play the housewife role. She told me how she had offered to go round to her boyfriend's house to cook dinner for him as his parents are away - typically for Zoe, a rejection of the ideology but conforming to the practice of patriarchal relations. It had turned into a hilarious fiasco, however - Zoe cannot cook at all. She made use of the episode to tell her boyfriend that here indeed was the evidence that just because she's a girl doesn't mean she can automatically cook; he had simply assumed she could and was mildly bemused by what transpired. (3/21 1986 interview notes)

### 6.3 *Endangered transitions : case studies*

From this group of four younger girls, we can see how educational experiences begin to take shape in ways which do not help to protect girls from gender-specific vulnerabilities in negotiating critical transition points. The two cases which follow are particularly illustrative of the importance of viewing contributing factors in relation to each other. The social and educational resources available to Julie (1/5) cannot

readily assist her to unfold her potential, neither at home nor at school. Belinda (1/24), on the other hand, finds herself expected to achieve well both by her family and the school milieu, but she has fewer supporting resources to do so relative to those enjoyed by her peer reference group.

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### Case 1/5 : Julie : Wilhelma School

Julie arrived at Wilhelma with a lively, intrinsic enjoyment of schoolwork and a positive orientation to the school. She had friends there and found the lessons more interesting than at primary. She was not, at that time, thinking of schooling in terms of its relevance to the labour market; Julie simply liked school and enjoyed all her subjects. By the time she was halfway through her second year things had changed. Julie now saw schooling in purely instrumental terms, had developed an antipathy towards science and practical crafts like woodwork, and found the quality of the learning environment unsatisfactory. She blamed Wilhelma teachers' laxity with pupil behaviour, especially with the noisy boys. In general, teacher personality and style were important to Julie's liking for a subject, and she felt this year's teachers weren't so good.

Julie had not lost her motivation to do well at school, but her concern was now with making a successful transition to employment at 16+, disinclined to follow her fourth-year sister's example, who was then on the verge of expulsion for truancy and disruptive behaviour. Julie had thought of becoming a policewoman or a hairdresser in 1984, but by 1985 she simply wanted "a" job. Her preference would be to follow her 17 year old sister into bank work, who was Julie's main source of information and advice. She intended to choose options like computer studies and business studies, "for typing and that", subjects "good for getting a job", and would only stay on after 16 were she unable to find training or employment. In fact, Julie had been identified early on as bright, but her mother had rejected any idea of further/higher education :

"The teacher [at my primary school] said I should be able to go to college, and my mum said no, I'm not going to college.....[long pause].....My sister's mate's friend, she went to college, and she ended up working as a barmaid."

Julie unquestioningly accepted this view. Gradually, her experiences at Wilhelma seemed to confirm both the pointlessness of schooling and that she herself would not do so well anyway. By her third year, in 1986, she doubted she'd get the qualifications needed for a job in a bank, despite being seen as "the brains of the family", an attribute whose usefulness she questioned:

"My eldest sister had hardly any qualifications, she went on the YTS [and then got taken on permanently soon after she started]....You've got just as good a [chance]

when you're on YTS.....At the end of the year you don't know if you've got the job - but then college, I know a girl who went, did all her A-levels, still ended up working as a waitress ...My other sister, she ain't got no qualifications, and she's getting more money [making fruit salads than my sister in the bank] and she's enjoying her work too."

By this time, Julie saw herself as having received very little encouragement from her teachers and was thoroughly disillusioned with school. Feeling now she'd had no choice but to come to same school as her sisters, Julie hated Wilhelma, where the pupils (especially the boys) ran riot, making work impossible. Julie had forgotten that she had enjoyed her first months there, remembering only that she had "always" hated it, that Wilhelma had a bad reputation in the community, that her eldest sister had been bullied, and that her mother - a dinnerlady there - disliked the atmosphere too.

Coming up to option choice, Julie was poised between a positively instrumental view of schooling and doubt over whether doing well made much difference in the end. Transition to the labour market was, she knew, more difficult and differently structured than in the past. She saw a mixture of formal qualifications, luck and the use of contacts through school and careers office as the way to secure a foothold. Julie was planning to take history, child development ("for fun"), and both accounts and office practice as options the following year. These last would give her a fallback into secretarial work if she didn't manage to get into a bank. For Julie, school had little ultimate point to it : "As long as you know the basics. Learning about Christopher Columbus discovering America, I don't think that will help you get a job in a bank. It's just knowledge, isn't it, really?" She still wanted a job with security and prospects for getting ahead - that was why she had fixed her sights on a bank - and intended to do her best to achieve this aim. However, at 14+ Julie knew that effort is only half the story: "You can [get what you want in life], there's about a 50% chance, but you've got to go out there and get it, really....You may not get it, but at least you've tried your hardest."

### 1/24 : Belinda : Sternrise School

At 12, Belinda rather liked the idea of becoming an opera singer, but viewed it as unrealistic given the difficulty of breaking into show business, so had decided to become a vet as she'd always liked animals. Already well-informed on training and qualifications, Belinda had been using the school library as well as talking to her parents. She had no doubts about her ability to cope, but intended to take typing too, in case "everything falls through and I don't get my exams, I'll just get a job as a secretary" like her mother. Belinda thought herself very lucky to be at Sternrise, which had better facilities than other schools she and her parents had visited or heard about. She had been placed in the A-stream and was doing very well, enjoying all her subjects.

A year later, Belinda was brimming over with confidence about her ability and determination to succeed, thinking herself very fortunate to have the educational opportunities her talented father was denied through class disadvantage. Her only quibble was that schoolwork wasn't always challenging enough, some teachers not sufficiently serious or demanding. Belinda "loved learning", but her commitment was firmly and instrumentally anchored in her aspiration to become a vet, dictating all her plans and decisions. Hence she had taken home economics as her second year 'mini-option' so she could learn about vitamins, just as relevant for

animals as for humans! But Belinda was becoming uncomfortably aware of power relations at home, at school, and in the workplace. Her father had to be "handled carefully", inclined to get angry when out-argued by his daughter. As for teachers,

"you can't have a proper argument with them - there's always the feeling that you are the pupil and they are the teacher.... You have to do what they say.... That's why I don't want to be a secretary. I couldn't have a boss, I couldn't be under anyone.... and if you think you're right and he's wrong.... he's right whether or not he is."

Belinda at 13+ was in the midst of conflicting images and messages about gender divisions in production/reproduction relations, which led her explicitly to voice the uncertainties and incompatibilities involved in constructing her future. She does not move towards a recognition of gender divisions as structured inequality, turning instead towards meritocratic individualism and rejecting the collectivism of feminist solidarity. (The lucidity of her account of the tensions she was experiencing is extraordinary.)

Matters then took a potential turn for the worse: by the spring of her third year Belinda had redefined herself as a bit lazy and of only average ability compared to her peers in the A-stream, especially in sciences, concluding that she would not get into university to study veterinary science after all:

"Everyone would say we're all snobs [in our class].... But I don't think I'm any cleverer than any other person.... I know I'm not [special]. I don't think I'm particularly wonderful. I'm just a bit clever. But now, being in a class with people about my standard I don't see it so much.... It's only with other classes you notice it.... I'm about average in my class... You see I'm not that good at science - that's what bothers me.... A lot of the boys are doing physics, but that's only because they're doing things like graphics and CDT, and there's only 3 or 4 girls doing that.... I'd rather pick what I want to do.... and I know the things I've chosen will help me in my future career."

Belinda was considering history or geography teaching as a fallback and also mentioned the possibility of working with children, something she now claimed she had always wanted to do. Her option choices were an attempt to span this range of potential destinations: biology and chemistry; history and geography; home economics (rather than parentcraft, in which only CSE was offered).

She knew her main source of information and advice would be the school rather than her parents, so she made a point of finding things out for herself. However, the contradictory pressures of being working-class and female in the individualist, competitive and middle class culture of a co-educational streamed school were beginning to take their toll. Belinda at 14+ could still conclude with spirit that "maybe I'll decide to travel the world and chop down trees!" But she had lost confidence in herself, balanced on a knife-edge between assimilating to or rejecting A-stream culture and its associated expectations; neither school nor family context could help in finding productive routes through gender-linked conflicts. At school, 'equal opportunities' implied a denial of male privilege whilst gender-differentiated outcomes remained. At home, Belinda's sympathies were torn between a mother she saw as less "intelligent" than her father, but who affirmed women's rights to a career, whereas her

husband compensated for his frustrated talents by reasserting male dominance. What it might indeed be available and realistic to aim at, given the complex factors with which Belinda had to juggle, seemed very uncertain indeed :

"I want to be one of the women who get a good job; but if I didn't, I'd know it was because I didn't get the qualifications. And I'd think I should have tried harder....It's different if you've got a job lined up. If your dad owns a firm or a shop....I want to have children, but I want to have a career. But I don't want to leave my kids with anyone else. If I went into looking after children, I could look after my own at the same time....there's no way I'd want my children to be left with anyone else....A lot of men still think that you don't work if you stay at home, whereas you do as much work as they do. But I think unemployment has been a step forward...I think a lot of men like staying at home and looking after the kids. 'Cos I don't think it should be the woman's work....Because women can get jobs like men [today]....I wouldn't like my husband to stay at home. I'd want each of us to have ample opportunity to look after the house and go to work."

### 6.3.1 Discussion

Both Julie and Belinda had been identified by primary school teachers as 'having potential', but only Belinda's parents were in a position to make what they then saw as appropriate educational decisions for their daughter. Julie's parents saw themselves as having little choice about their children's schooling, although they were aware that Wilhelma School might not be offering what they would call a good education. A good education was learning "the basics"; getting jobs was another matter, in which qualifications did not necessarily help. Wilhelma did not succeed in fostering Julie's potential, nor in widening her horizons. Julie would have looked as though she did not need support, especially in comparison with girls like her middle sister or with boys who found no work at all in the old skilled trades. By the time Julie reached her third year, she hated school and was hoping just to survive the course with enough good fortune to secure an entree to a bank at 16. Secondary schooling had succeeded in nothing but exacerbating Julie's vulnerability; it was less the gender-specificity of transitions that was in question, but whether, within gender



and class boundaries, Julie would manage an optimal result *despite* her educational experiences.

Belinda had more room to manoeuvre at Sternrise, but in order to 'stay in the game' she would have to resolve *both* gender *and* class contradictions. Her answer, inevitably, was meritocratic individualism, but she then decided she did not measure up to the standards set for the A-stream context in which she found herself. The job she had set her heart upon, and the very purpose of all this education, needed science qualifications. She came to rate herself as only average, without having a framework for understanding why it was that "only 3 or 4 girls" in her class were joining the 'science elite.' Belinda began to scale down her aspirations and to shift them further towards gender-appropriateness, which had the immediate advantage of offering a solution to the problem of 'career vs family' that she had earlier identified when she thought of the demands of having a veterinary practice. Belinda slipped from marginality into struggle and then avoidance by the time she was 14. Her fourth year at Sternrise would certainly have been critical for the course she subsequently took, and here primary habitus resources might come into play. Belinda was the elder of two in a family where parents were keen to foster intergenerational upward mobility and knew something of how to go about it, e.g. selecting a specific kind of school for their daughter. Julie was the youngest of three daughters whose parents were less active in this respect, and who also would have had less opportunity to exercise their educational preferences for their children, living as they did in an isolated and poorly served locality.

But neither of the two schooling environments, different as they were, was 'able' to work against the reproduction of gender and class relations. On the contrary, both girls were progressively fenced in by their schooling experiences. Julie had initially hovered between avoidance and struggle; by 14 she was settling for instrumentality.

She had engaged strongly with trying to work through the problems of production/reproduction en route, and had not given up in principle, even if in practical terms she was inclined to accede to the status quo. It is significant that Julie had originally covertly aspired to become a policewoman, (8) but by the third interview she had relinquished all memory of this or any other idea but bank or office work. Similarly, at 12 Julie was uncertain whether occupational segregation by sex was due to men's greater adventurousness and ambition or to prejudice and discrimination against women; at 13, she had decided it to be the latter, and she was overtly annoyed about that: "They don't let girls do the same jobs because they think girls can't do it - but it ain't, girls can do it just as well.....Men should stop being chauvinist pigs." But at 14, Julie had resigned herself to the fact that the world is as it is; women are disadvantaged both at work and in the family, but "it's just as much the women's fault" since many women "just don't notice it." Meanwhile, Julie's pressing problem was to get a toehold in the labour market.

#### *6.4 Promising transitions : case studies*

The five girls in this group were all allocated to strong gender locations during the period of study. In contrast to the girls discussed immediately above, their transition prospects look favourable on the basis of their experiences so far (all are in the younger group of girls). I have selected two quite different examples, however. Amy (1/26), one of the very few girls in the sample from an achieved professional middle-class background, is the best example available of a stable gender location in codebending. Lisa (1/19), located in cultural apprenticeship, is rather like Bridget (1/3, see earlier, p.235), in the sense that her family is trying to shift their social location by intergenerational upward mobility. However, Lisa's chances are rather better than Bridget's : she attends Dame's Trust rather than Wilhelma, and her

parents - especially her mother - are more sure that education is the route to that mobility.

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### Case 1/26 : Amy : Sternrise School

Between the ages of 11 and 14 Amy retained her aspiration to become a lawyer, specifically, a barrister, which combines her interests and talents in both language and drama. At 11, she already knew that she would need "tons" of exams and "years" of university study, but had no qualms about the prospect of the effort and achievement necessary, feeling that she was both at the right school (\*) and in the right form. Sternrise had better opportunities and more facilities than other local schools, so when Amy had not been offered a place there on secondary transfer, she attended a local girls' school for a term until a space came up, when she was placed in the A-stream. At their first parents' evening, her parents were repeatedly told by others how fortunate they were to have their daughter in the best form in the first year, something of especial significance to Amy - both her parents felt they could have achieved more, educationally and occupationally, had they attended better schools themselves. (\*\*) Amy was also happy to be at a co-educational school, which she felt spurs girls on to achieve and to keep up, even though it is "a well-known fact that girls are supposed to be cleverer than boys at this age." Amy came to Sternrise with an intrinsic enjoyment of schooling and seeing the qualifications needed for all levels of occupations in academic terms. The local labour market had already been discarded as of relevance to her, because "I don't want to end up sitting behind the till at Tesco's." She was well-informed about the relationship between qualifications, unemployment and credential inflation, concluding that it is precisely in times of high unemployment that qualifications are more essential than ever, because the jobs that are available will go to the best qualified. These sorts of issues were discussed frequently at home, in the context of Amy's

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\* One of the things Amy said she liked about Sternrise is that the teachers don't "talk down" to pupils. She explicitly drew an analogy with the way she and her parents were bringing up her three year old sister (her only sibling) as a "little person" rather than regarding her as a baby - for example, using long words rather than baby talk, and explaining them to her when she didn't understand. (Amy reported her sister's favourite word of the moment to be 'unanimous'!) Contrast Amy's interpretation of teacher-pupil relations at Sternrise - as a daughter of teachers, people she knows to be human beings with private and family lives, as she said - with Belinda's (1/24) views at 13+ (in the preceding section 6.2.2), the daughter of a secretary mother and a bus driver father.

\*\* Amy's mother had gained a scholarship to an "upper class" girls' school where everyone was "much posher" than herself, and where she had felt "degraded" by what she described to her daughter as the "masculinised bitchiness" of her fellow pupils and her teachers. "She had it drummed into her that she was no good, so she didn't bother and left halfway through her A-levels, she says it's one of the biggest mistakes she ever made" (1/26/3). She did a BEd at Goldsmiths and became a primary teacher. Amy's father came from "not a rich, but from a much higher, brought up more" background. He had attended one of the first comprehensive schools, which he described to his daughter as having been "awful", where the facilities and atmosphere were poor and so he didn't try as hard to achieve as he could have done. He too became a primary teacher, and is now a head. Until halfway through junior school, Amy had been a pupil at the school where her mother taught and where her father was acting head.

own education and her future.

Amy especially liked English, art and history. Regarding maths as "not my strong point," although she'd enjoyed it and had no problems with the work at junior school, Amy identified her teacher's 'flip' style as the cause. By her third year, Amy's interests had shifted more strongly towards the humanities. She had come to see maths as a subject in which she had always been weak, which worried her; her parents had recently offered to pay for extra tutoring for her should she wish. She concluded that the maths teachers she'd had at Sternrise had not been optimal from the point of view of weak pupils. In making her option choices, Amy had talked extensively with her parents, teachers and peers, finally deciding upon biology, geography, history, French and drama. Each choice was purposeful, (\*) and there was never any question that her selection would be an academically weighted one. i.e. practical, vocational subjects were excluded on principle. Amy knew that dropping physics closed some doors irrevocably, but it seemed safer to take a subject she felt confident she could pass - though she was well-aware of the gender implications and was perplexed by what she was observing, since in her form girls' performance generally outstrips boys', including in maths - and teachers were always pressing girls to take physics and CDT:

"But I would really like to be able to take chemistry or physics because people would have thought, oh, good, she'd not just taking the usual girls' subject, biology. If they said in our class, hands up who's taking biology, all the girls' hands would be up, physics it would be all the boys, chemistry it would be a few of each....The main thing in my mind was keeping as many doors open as possible and keeping a good balance....My thoughts kept telling me to take two sciences, but as it is I felt....I'd never cope. So I thought geography is quite a wide thing, and so is history....And I've wanted to be a lawyer for ages and ages, failing that a drama or English teacher."

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\* Amy shared an interest in history with her mother, so had always assumed she would continue with the subject. At Sternrise, a modern foreign language was expected to be part of the kind of option choice pattern pupils like Amy would select; she decided she was better at French than German. These two choices represent twin (and interactive) principles arising repeatedly in Amy's biography: gender-appropriateness by defining herself as having similar talents and interests as her mother; and optimisation of academic achievement chances by strategic planning of her route. So, given that one science was compulsory, Amy excluded physics because of her weakness in maths and decided on biology ("the easy option - bad on my part, really") having heard that chemistry is more difficult as it needs maths too. At no point, however, did she consider taking integrated science instead: this is a low-status, less academic science option altogether. Similarly, having chosen drama (as relevant to English literature) and intending to go to a night school class to pursue art, Amy did not want to take another "recreational" subject. This excluded CDT (and female gender-vocational subjects, which had never been considered for the same reasons as integrated science was rejected). She was then left with law or geography, but knew she did not have to study law at school to read for a law degree. The third principle was therefore, to make best use of the range of opportunities available to her.

In 1984, Amy had mentioned the idea of becoming a nursery teacher as an alternative aspiration to the bar, but at that time she had judged it a more "exalted" job than it is by having defined its content and entry requirements in inaccurately academic terms. By 1986, she had therefore raised the level of her alternative, fallback, aspiration to be a drama or English teacher, connecting her enjoyment of drama to a 'serious and realistic' aim, since "everyone laughs at you if you want to be an actress" - a very insecure occupation, too. (\*\*)

There was no doubt in Amy's mind that she would go to university, that education lends access to better employment and career chances, and that it had been her upbringing which had encouraged her to think in this way. Leaving at 16 may promise more enjoyment, but the reality is an everyday job, whereas Amy wants to do something interesting and out-of-the-ordinary. She knew most lawyers are men, but rather liked the idea of being an exception, not expecting real problems in getting in and ahead. Amy certainly did not want to be locked into a routine existence - and this included being a teacher, like her mother, who had told her it is a terrible and tiring job she should not consider at all.

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\*\* Compare Amy's acceptance of the normative judgement on acting as an aspiration with Zoe's (3/21, in section 6.2.1) experience at Sternrise in this respect.

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### Case 1/19 : Lisa : Dame's Trust

Lisa took school very much as it came, with no strong preferences or dislikes for particular subjects or teaching styles, though she felt the learning environment was more favourable when teachers were firm about classroom behaviour. By the time she was 12, Lisa was already familiar with and integrated into homeworking by helping her mother in her spare time, doing light assembly and packing. Her image of the local labour market focused on shopwork, cleaning, garage jobs and factory machining - in which several female kin were employed.

However, Lisa had spent a fair amount of time in hospital over the years, having a hip joint problem which required repeated surgical intervention. She was, therefore, quite knowledgeable about the range of jobs available in hospitals and had always wanted to be a nurse. She had already made considerable effort to find out what nursing entailed and the qualifications she would need, both by looking out library books and asking her mother. But Lisa had never considered becoming a doctor, for which she supposed more qualifications and training would be required.

She considered it unlikely that she would change her mind about what she wanted to be - and in fact had not done so by the third interview in 1986. She simply became more precise and sure of her goals, whereas in 1984 she had concluded that becoming a nurse "isn't that important....It's just that I can't think of anything else I'd want to be." At 14+, then, Lisa had decided to become a paediatric nurse; her fallback was to join the London Ambulance Service; failing that, any sort of hospital job. In the interim she had become very involved with the St. John's Ambulance Brigade, which she saw both as an interesting leisure-time activity and as a prevocational training opportunity.

When it came to choosing options, Lisa was fully prepared. She had actively sought out detailed information on what subjects and qualifications she should pursue, taking advantage of all the advice and information the school provided about option choice - though she noticed that the teachers seemed more interested in guiding pupils' decisions according to their previous achievements and subject preferences rather than in terms of their vocational relevance for the occupations they had in mind. Lisa considered that most girls choose their options with a view to their job aspirations and expectations rather than intrinsic preferences. Therefore, it was her mother to whom she herself turned for advice.

But Lisa, too, switched from physics to biology after her teacher suggested she would find this easier. Her other choices so far were to be textiles/fashion design, child development, and chemistry. The school's option choice system meant she had been unable to take home economics as well as child development, as she had planned to do. She had still to decide between games, drama and IT for her final option. In other words, Lisa had chosen those subjects (biology, chemistry, child development) which, as well as maths and English, she knew were required or thought would be useful for nursing; the remainder were gender-vocational or leisure-oriented choices. Lisa intended to stay on at school as long as it took her to secure the exam passes she needed to enter nursing at 17.

Lisa's pattern of option choices indicates that she neither saw herself, nor is she seen by the school, as an obvious higher education candidate. Although the vocational relevance of schooling was evidently of overriding importance to her, this by no means implies that Lisa did not enjoy school. In fact, she explicitly liked it, found that - as a 'quiet' girl - she got on well with teachers, and took the view that school is as much fun as anything else if you want it to be. At 14+, Lisa was very clear about what she wanted - and what she did not want. Her parents, especially her mother, wanted their daughter to achieve upward mobility by educational-occupational achievement. Lisa's mother would like her daughter to go to university, but she herself was categorically opposed to the idea. Whilst her mother sees university as leading to "higher" jobs, Lisa was emphatically uninterested in career progression. She wanted to be a ward nurse, and she knew a degree to be unnecessary. Lisa equated university with Oxbridge; she commented that there are no "proper" universities in London, "just colleges"! University seemed "so high up", by which Lisa meant that "stuck up" people go there and "I wouldn't like it. I don't think I'd feel right. Living in the East End and so on, we tend to be different."

#### 6.4.1 Discussion

Amy and Lisa, with promising transitions biographies, could be described as 'holding their own' between the ages of 11 and 14. Nevertheless, the gender-specificity of their educational and occupational aspirations and decisionmaking remains an evident feature. Equally noticeable is that both are doing relatively well

in their respective school contexts; and both enjoy the active advice and support of their families, especially their mothers. Amy's and Lisa's mothers are very keen that their daughters 'do better' than they have, and they see educational achievement as essential to this goal.

Lisa's roots in the local community culture are very clear in her rejection of going to university. However, in accordance with her mother's wishes Lisa has also rejected the kind of occupational inheritance characteristic for her class fraction: she will not become a factory machinist like her mother and her female relatives. This route is still practised in her family (in the early eighties her young aunt left Dame's Trust to go into the local machining factory) but Lisa's mother is determined her daughter will move up in the world. Lisa's solution, given that her local community culture is highly salient to her, has been to 'choose' nursing, which symbolically prioritises the caring element of femininity, enjoys social esteem, but does not place her beyond the bounds of her gendered and classed cultural world. Lisa's perspectives on gender divisions are similarly characteristic for girls located in cultural apprenticeship. She consistently denies gender divisions in production as being anything other than women's 'fault', but in the reproduction sphere she explicitly demands equality, rejecting marriage and children outright on the grounds that men exploit women's labour, might beat their wives up if they protest, and that mothers are financially extremely vulnerable. Within her own terms of reference, Lisa is pursuing her aims with determination, but there is no whisper of crossing occupational gender boundaries. Becoming a doctor is out of the question on both class and gender grounds; rather, Lisa wants to secure an optimal position within those boundaries.

Schooling cannot be said to connect organically with girls like Lisa, but *they* are generally able to use schooling for their own purposes. Lisa's case highlights,

though, how schooling facilitates the reproduction of gender relations by affirming and reproducing the academic/vocational divide. For girls like Lisa, 'academic' subjects are only important for their 'use-value' in gaining access to the occupations they have already fixed upon, and which the school neither questions or 'works' on. In most schools, as at Dame's Trust, careers education begins *after* option choice and is oriented towards informing and advising pupils about what they have 'freely' decided to do rather than problematising 'choice' processes in the first place. In a context where subjects have already been opted for and only two years separate the pupils from examinations and labour market entry or another round of subject specialisation, it is indeed illogical to problematise that which has been structured for channelling and closure. Under these circumstances, 'academic' subjects *become* 'vocational' subjects for the majority of girls, chosen for their relevance to job aspirations just as much as business studies is chosen in order to gain typing skills.

The consideration of Amy's case leads back to an earlier discussion (Chapter 4, section 4.2.5) of the situation of daughters of professional women who themselves came from working-class families, as Amy's mother did. Amy's parents do not practise a truly egalitarian division of labour, but certainly share housework and childcare more extensively than most girls in the sample reported. Amy's mother has never relinquished paid employment (except for maternity leave) and has always insisted that her husband take his share of the domestic labour. Her daughter Amy has been partially empowered, in class terms and educationally, but not so much in terms of gender relations. Amy judges her parents' (relatively progressive) accommodation as egalitarian. She does not register the fundamental ways in which patriarchal relations shape her parents' way of life at home and at work, which they and she explain from an 'equal opportunities' perspective. For herself, as long as she has a better job (than her primary teacher mother) and a reasonable husband (like her primary headteacher father), Amy thinks she will face no problems in the future. She



has grasped how her mother's life has been structured by class inequalities, but not how it has been structured by gender inequalities. Rather, Amy's trust in benevolent social progress and meritocratic individualism is expressed repeatedly, here in her third interview :

"....there might be problems in being a woman lawyer, but I'd soon get rid of them!....I suppose you'd have to be really really good so they couldn't fault you on anything....I don't agree with the WISE bus because it's only for girls - it should be for boys too because they're the ones who've been excluding girls, so they should know women can do it....It should have been called People Into Science and Engineering. When the bus came the boys in our class thought 'not another thing for the girls!' They get fed-up, they don't like being excluded - it it's meant to be equal they should have a chance as well....People are scared of what others think. If some people weren't prepared to say what they think we'd probably still be in Edwardian times....You have to be prepared to toughen up, have a thick skin, and be outgoing and determined....[Women] shouldn't shut men out because there are men who want exactly the same things as they do, and if the men want to help they should be pleased and accept the men into their groups. I don't agree with shutting anyone out. People would hate it if men grouped together and wouldn't let women in - that would be terrible." (1/26/3)

At the same time, the way Amy modelled herself on her mother is striking : her mother was attending an evening class in law, in which she had always been interested, Amy wanted to be a barrister herself. Her mother's hobby is genealogy and she loves history, so did Amy. Amy's alternative aspiration at 12 was to become a nursery teacher, her mother is a primary teacher who "really likes children." Her mother studied practical and academic subjects with a humanities emphasis, these are Amy's preferences, too. Amy's father, however, concentrated on academic subjects with a scientific emphasis; she goes to him for help with her maths homework, to her mother with art. They have a PC, on which her father spends much time programming; her mother plays games on it. Amy herself plays games (by herself) and programmes (with her father).

The direction taken by Amy's transitions biography was very evidently prefigured

by her family context and further framed by her schooling context. Her first three years at Sternrise are accompanied by an intensification of gender-specific subject preference and performance. In the 'equal opportunities' environment there, it was the free play which ensured a socially reproductive (interim) outcome at option choice. Amy was perplexed by the gendered patterns that emerged amongst her peers, but she could not explain them in other than individual ability terms. On the other hand, Amy was still engaged with schooling, still confident, and still aiming high; she could look forward to the moratorium of extended education.

### 6.5 *Well-managed transitions : case studies*

As they came up to their sixteenth birthdays in 1986, five of the older girls had secured favourable interim outcomes and prospects for the 'next round' of negotiating critical transitions. The natures of these outcomes and prospects are, of course, variable, but they each represent a particular form of success-in-context. As we pointed out earlier, the more weakly located girls are unlikely to be challenging the terms of gender discourse as they make the transition from schooling to training/employment, but, like Melissa (3/3), they might secure favourable prospects within the 'gender conventional' range, particularly in comparison with their immediate peers. Patrice (3/11), on the other hand, is engaged in fulfilling the terms of her cultural apprenticeship, looking forward with satisfaction and confidence to 'real life.' Under current conditions, she is not moving towards an unconventional future in gendered terms. Those girls located in marginality are more likely to be pushing against the boundaries of gender-acceptability over the course of their adolescent biographies. Eleanor (3/10) is an example of this pattern, where directing the challenge within an educational (rather than a labour market) context allows for more leeway. In other words, extending education acts as a *moratorium* for girls

with interests like Eleanor's.

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### Case 3/3 : Melissa : Wilhelma School

Unsure of what she wanted to do on leaving school, Melissa had chosen a broad range of options at 14: Science at Work, computer studies, business studies, French and history. She liked Wilhelma, but lacked confidence in her ability, so was particularly pleased she had been put into an O-level group for history, her favourite subject. Melissa's father had discouraged her from the idea of becoming a nursery nurse (she enjoyed babysitting) on the grounds that she loses her temper too easily (though she disagreed with him). She had tentatively wondered about going into construction work, like her father, but had never taken the idea seriously because she is a girl, and because the working conditions of such male-typed jobs are the opposite of what counts as a 'good' job, such as working in a bank, where employment is secure and conditions pleasant. Melissa also felt that employers would not take girls into non-traditional jobs, which meant that she, at any rate, would be discouraged from trying in the first place. She certainly did not want to become a factory machinist, like her mother, who told her there's no future in such work.

A year later Melissa felt she had chosen well, and was indeed doing well - top of the form in computer studies; very good on both business studies and maths; and in an O-level English set. Melissa had gained confidence, having found a secure place in the school's achievement hierarchy, which she saw as represented through the post-options setting practices which defined "the clever ones, the middle - and the rest." She found it helpful to be in "serious exam groups" where numbers were small and the learning climate positive. Given reasonable exam results, she had provisionally decided to leave at 16 - less disenchanted with school as rather positively attracted by the idea of working - as long as she could find a 'real' job rather than a YTS. Her enjoyment of business studies and computer studies had prompted a firmer interest in office or bank work over the course of the year, reinforced by her experiences as a Saturday girl, which led her to conclude that shopwork doesn't use your brains and is monotonous. The spring of 1986 saw Melissa looking forward to her exams with confidence; her achievement had steadily improved, so that she had been entered for 5 O-levels and 4 CSEs (with two double entries, in maths and computer studies, as a safety precaution). She now thought she'd done better than average at school, but adding that she didn't "want to be bigheaded" about it.

Melissa had turned to her parents for advice in choosing her options, expecting that the school would play a greater role when it came to serious jobhunting. She knew, as did other girls at Wilhelma, that the careers teacher had built up a fund of personal contacts to employers, using his influence to help pupils he saw as 'deserving'. (\*) In the autumn of her fifth year Melissa therefore made a beeline for him, circumventing the newer school-based careers advice personnel and procedures that had been made available at the school.

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\* The careers teacher in question had been at the school for many years, and he presided over a little 'transitions empire.' This brought a privileged channel of access to local employers which was of particular importance for Wilhelma pupils in their isolated and disadvantaged position. It was, however, also clear that this channel was made available only to pupils of whom he approved: they had to be hard working, respectable and well-behaved. The pupils themselves found what he had to offer, i.e. 'real' jobs, much more valuable than what was available through the new system, which offered reactive advice and information and which could direct them into colleges and YTS, but which could not produce jobs in the same way. This 'inofficial' system, which had been left on the formal margins by the new arrangements in which the old careers teacher was not integrated, was in fact more in accordance with local labour market traditions and young people's reformulations of these under changed circumstances. Being known locally acted as a reference of good character and reputation, as 12 year old Melissa well expressed:

I think it might be easier to work in a shop [around here], 'cos everyone round here knows...the people, but if you work up in central London, if you just go up and ask for a job they won't give it to you, well, they might...but you won't know who it is and that, will you?...[Here] they'll know you, know you're alright for the job - not go nicking things and that! (Case 3/3/1)

Young people translated these traditions into the school context, expressed as expecting the school and the teachers to provide them with a job through channels of patronage and recommendation. They knew who at Wilhelma would and could operate in this way; the role played by the old careers teacher came up repeatedly in interviews with Wilhelma girls. Another respondent said, for example: "Everybody goes to him. He does it by contacting everybody - he got my mate a job the other week....She's working as a messenger girl in the courts...Mr Newboy [the 'new system' careers teacher] gives you advice and information but it's Mr. Oldhand gets you the jobs, the jobs are sent to him." (Case 3/1/3)

Melissa's teachers had told her she was doing well enough to stay on; her parents left her to make her own decisions. She preferred the certainty of secure employment now to the unknown prospects were she to continue her education. By the spring she had been firmly accepted for a Grade 1 clerking job at a major bank for the following autumn. Melissa was extremely pleased about this, given the difficulties others were having, and she was looking forward to working her way up through the clerical grades. She wanted "to get to the top...dealing with all the big problems, making loans and that - that's Grade 4, the top." Melissa had "never seen a bank manager at all....But I think it's mainly men at the top but equal when they're working their way through....Maybe women want to settle for a job and not work their way up...[or] because they think women can't do it." For herself, she saw no reason why she shouldn't move into management grades in the future, though such dizzy heights did not concern her for the present. Melissa looked forward with quiet confidence and satisfaction to a secure future at work and a conventional family life. Apart from not wanting to be a machinist, she explicitly aspired to have a life like her mother's, with "a good home and a good family and a loving husband."

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### Case 3/11 : Patrice : Dame's Trust School

Patrice had been consistently guided by her kin into entering the rag trade family occupational tradition. At 14, her central role model was her aunt, a self-employed designer dressmaker, for whom she was occasionally allowed to help out with some of the easier cutting tasks. Patrice had never much resisted the future her family hoped for her. She had briefly thought of becoming a beautician or selling cosmetics, but had been firmly discouraged by her parents, and so she returned to "what I've always wanted to be, really." As it happened, neither of her parents were now employed in their original trades (her father had started out as a tailor, her mother as a dressmaker) due to labour market changes and local economic decline. Patrice's father had long since become a black cabbie, after years of casual dock labour, and her mother was a canteen assistant; yet they both saw the rag trade as offering a secure future, because "everybody needs dresses." Patrice was in fact well informed about local labour market structure and opportunity. She saw herself as embedded in a distinctive local culture and economy which she valued highly.

Patrice had only discussed her choice of options with her parents, then. She chose subjects which she thought relevant to her future job, her future family life, and her leisure interests : fabric craft & design, child development, sociology, biology, and music. Schooling was something of an irrelevance for Patrice in the sense that she viewed access to the labour market and to particular occupations as governed by other principles than formal qualifications, i.e. access and training was achieved through channels of cultural inheritance and on-the-job experience. However, she valued the 'general education' she thought school could and should provide, so she wanted to get as much as possible from it and to do her best. However, two terms into her fourth year Patrice was not enjoying school very much at all any more, disturbed to some extent by increasing levels of classroom pupil disruption, especially in those subjects where her teachers were too "soft". Many girls had started truanting, and Patrice herself felt like "skipping off" to avoid the lessons she disliked most, especially sociology, which to her frustration had turned out to be a 'sink' option. She persuaded her mother to let her stay at home

from time to time, a practice which became institutionalised after the onset of the teachers' industrial action - Patrice's mother refused to send her daughter back to school after lunchtime once cover had been withdrawn at breaks. Neither were her marks matching her expectations, and she had firmly decided to leave at 16 unless she could find no 'real' job, already rejecting YTS as slave labour. By this time she had decided to maintain family traditions in another context, by becoming a sales assistant in the fabrics department of a large store, and she expected to find her way there without the school's help. Patrice had concluded that making a living as a dressmaker under current economic circumstances is difficult, especially since she did not judge herself as outstandingly talented.

By spring 1986 matters had improved and stabilised at school. The learning atmosphere had improved after the early departure of the most disaffected girls; and her marks had risen, so she would be sitting 8 CSEs that summer. That most of her particular friends had left as soon as they had turned 16 was, to Patrice, a pity: "There's no point in coming to school for 11 years of your life and not having anything to show for it. Although exams are good for getting jobs, they're not as important to me as having something to show for it." She herself was looking forward with optimism and hopeful anticipation towards employment and adult life, which would bring more interest and variety as well as money. Patrice was in the process of applying for retail shopfloor jobs (preferably with day release) at the big London chain stores, having used the careers advisory service only to procure a list of addresses. She and her parents agree that YTS is a "liberty" - young people are exploited. So she was cynical about teachers' and career officers' positive support for YTS, and felt vindicated when the firms to which she'd written only forwarded regular employment applications forms once she'd returned the YTS documentation they had originally sent. Patrice was very confident that she would find what she wanted. She was hoping for a future which combined moderate success at work with continued membership in a tight-knit community culture.

My nan lives next door, my aunt lives across the road, I've got aunts and uncles everywhere. The only one who lives far away is Essex....[If I became something like a lawyer] I don't think it'd change anything...All around me are my family and friends, we all live in the same street and if anything, I think they'd be really proud if someone got on really well...[I can imagine eventually managing a floor as] it's nice to know that you might be up there in the top ranks, sort of, in charge of everything!...[But] if I'm honest with myself I'd really prefer just to be a sales assistant, so I'm always serving people...The further you go up the further you get away from people. (1986)

### Case 3/10 : Eleanor : Dame's Trust School

On secondary transfer, Eleanor's parents had unsuccessfully tried to get her a place at a local coeducational school with the best exam results reputation. At 14+, Eleanor viewed girls' schools as better anyway - in mixed schools, boys are "pushed ahead" by teachers and themselves, leading to gendered option choice patterns. This was important to Eleanor because she is attracted to the 'hard sciences', though she was reluctant to admit that her interests are uncommon even in her own school. Most of her classmates were intending to "escape" into biology as their compulsory science, causing Eleanor to categorise girls as lacking in ambition and determina-

tion. She would have chosen three sciences had the school's option system permitted this; as it was, she intended to "pick up" biology in the sixth form, teachers having advised her it was the easiest science to come back to later.

Eleanor had chosen her options with a view to openness but also with the idea in mind of becoming a scientist - physics, chemistry, German, textile craft & technology. Her parents, especially her mother, were keen for her to achieve upward mobility via education; her mother sees her own lack of qualifications as the reason for her restriction to routing non-manual work, which she dislikes. At 14+, Eleanor had adopted her mother's aspiration for her of going into police forensic work (combining her interest in science with her mother's view of the police force as a 'good' job). Both were already actively seeking information about it from the school's careers resources. A year later Eleanor had rejected forensic work, having realised more of what it entailed following media coverage of the 'peat bog man': "I didn't mind the bit about cutting him up or what he'd eaten, but when they went into how he was killed with the garotte around his neck it put me off." Interested in plants, Eleanor had decided upon becoming a laboratory scientist working on biogenetics; this required university, and though she knew no-one who had ever been she had no qualms about the prospect. Neither did she expect to get much assistance from the school or the Careers Office in this respect, finding fourth year careers lessons irrelevant to her needs and the school's Careers Officer placing priority on seeing those girls 'needing immediate attention' because they intended to leave at 16. Otherwise, Eleanor was pleased with and doing well in her options; Chemistry especially was rather harder than she'd expected, but this simply spurred her on to do as well as possible.

By the spring of 1986 Eleanor had concluded herself not to be a typical Dame's Trust pupil, realising she would be one of the few continuing on to A-levels and that the majority of her peers would be sitting mainly CSEs rather than O-levels like herself. She contemplated the upcoming exams with confidence, but had decided to transfer to FE college to take A-levels in maths, chemistry and physics or biology (though her teachers had tried to persuade her to stay). Eleanor had checked out her school's A-level pass rate and found it too low for her taste, so that although she had enjoyed her time at Dame's Trust she felt it best to move on. Her parents were very pleased with her progress; her mother tried to lend advice and support where she could - but the school's Careers Officer had proved no more helpful than Eleanor had anticipated. She planned to read horticultural science at university and then go into plant research, but when "I spoke to the Careers Officer she sent me leaflets on floristry and market gardening....I think the problem was....she thought I was just getting my ideas up, you know." Eleanor already knew what awaited her - on her own initiative, she had written to the Royal Horticultural Society and visited Henley Agricultural College. She was very determined to achieve her aspirations, and very sure that education was the route both to secure a satisfying career and to avoid entrapment into a gender-conventional future:

"Well, I want a good education. I see girls now that were in my primary school, three years older than me, round where I live, and I see them coming home from work, they've got kids - they're just doing the same things that have always been done. I don't want that....[Most of all] I want a good career, and to be happy....Most of the older people I know don't like their jobs, nearly all of them regret not carrying on with their education....Years ago women weren't ambitious, now they are, so things are changing."

### 6.5.1 Discussion

Melissa, Patrice and Eleanor, all approaching 16+ transitions by the end of the study in 1986, had all done relatively well at school and were looking forward positively to their respective futures. The parents of all three girls had shown an active interest in their daughters' educational progress and occupational plans, though in different ways and to differing extents. Melissa's parents wanted her to find a secure job with good working conditions, which working in a bank epitomised, and they discouraged her from jobs which they felt did not fit into this category but otherwise left Melissa to make her own decisions. They had no expectation that she would stay on at school after 16. Patrice's parents positively wanted her to maintain family occupational traditions, and they put a lot of effort into ensuring she did so. Through her family and community culture, Patrice had acquired an alternative set of understandings about the nature and mechanisms of educational-occupational transitions than that promoted by the school. Eleanor's parents were keen for her to secure upward mobility via education. They therefore assumed and expected an open-ended perspective on their daughter's educational participation : the higher she could rise, the better. They helped where they could, but knew their own resources for advice and information were limited. They and Eleanor had to rely on the school and her own initiative in making the 'right' decisions.

Melissa would count as having optimally fulfilled the expectations of her family and teachers : she was a model daughter and pupil, one who had never given cause for worry.

At 14 Melissa seemed very young for her age (especially noticeable in her voice on tape), rather shy and intermittently responsive, needing a very gentle interviewing technique. A year later she was still very shy and timid but nevertheless forthcoming and friendly, always 'doing her best' to respond to the questions. Coming up to 16 in 1986, Melissa's voice and manner had



retained a markedly childlike, dependent quality. By then she was of average height and very slightly plump, with curly gold-red shoulder-length hair, a pink and white freckled complexion and dimples. She wore a pink jumper and matching skirt in respectable BHS style, topped with a blue linen rain jacket. Wearing small earrings and very restrained eye and lip make-up, Melissa's visual image conformed to that which came across in the interview discussion - overwhelmingly respectable and demure. (3/3, 1986 interview notes)

She stood out at Wilhelma for these very reasons, and without a doubt these attributes would have produced a good deal of positive reinforcement from the (sorely-tried) teachers. (9) Once Melissa found herself in small teaching groups where the atmosphere was less overwhelming, her schoolwork improved steadily; she was what most people would term a 'late developer.' Certainly Melissa is an example of underchallenged consciousness in relation to gender divisions. She had few resources at home or at school to encourage more criticality and risk, so sought affirmation through normative conformity (which did receive affirmation). Apart from not wanting to become a machinist, Melissa saw her mother as having "a really good life" which she herself would like to emulate. Interestingly, it was Melissa's *father* who had consistently taken the more involved and directing part in shaping her transitions biography, which was not the case for Patrice or Eleanor.

In Patrice's case, both parents (and other kin) had taken a strong role in guiding her along the path of her cultural apprenticeship. School was not the mainstay of her identity, opportunities and resources; Patrice did well because she was positively attached to her local community culture, in which she was integrated and whose principles she understood very well. Patrice had considerable insight into gendered practices, but she did not see women as either powerless or passive. Rather, she took real pleasure in a positive affirmation of women's qualities and their worlds:

"A woman came in the other day and asked if any of us were getting married and so a few said yes....and I said definitely not!.....[But] I'd like to have kids....Cos I've talked to my mum just like this and she said, yes, 'cos nobody takes any notice any more [if you're a single mum]. So

I don't see the point in getting married.....[Women used to] for a home, and the children....but now if they haven't got a dad, it's no big deal anymore."

{.....}

Q : Is it because men aren't much good around the house or with kids?

"Well, I suppose that's part of it. But that's not the reason....Well, some of them are useful and some are nuisances!" (3/11/2)

"Whenever I go out I'm usually with my mates - my girl friends. We rarely go out with a group of boys....I enjoy myself with girls, I've never been out and about with boys....They just talk about totally different things....racing or something!" (3/11/2)

"[Men] tend to talk around you, you know, you're not there; they either do that or they bring you right in the middle so you're being talked about - I can't really describe it, but it's like you're there to be talked about and not to be talked to....In a group of women everyone talks together, everyone's talking....[But men would be in the same position] because although men when they get into a crowd they get all drunk and stuff, if I heard a woman's conversation I'd faint - I mean, some of the things you hear! It's disgusting!....{laughs}....I think they think women talk about flower-arranging! And when they hear what really goes on - it's funny really!....They might be the perfect little housewife when they're indoors and as soon as they get out, you know, here we go! {rolls her eyes and grins}" (3/11/3)

Eleanor, on the other hand, had a determined mother behind her. Dame's Trust *does* expect its girls to 'do well' - and it is a school with an illustrious academic past. The gilded boards listing the university achievements of past generations still adorn the entrance hall. But it is the very atmosphere of that past which makes school life difficult for many of its latterday pupils, those who cannot or do not wish to accommodate themselves to that mould. Girls not attracted to 'the academic life' find the milieu unhelpful because its values are not theirs. Those, such as Eleanor, who do see themselves aiming towards higher education find the school cannot offer them the advice and support that it must have done in the past. Where these girls can do well in their schoolwork, can exercise personal initiative, and are encouraged from home, they will 'hold the line' regardless, as Eleanor has done. Throughout the interviews with Eleanor, her actual and sensed *marginality* surfaces at numerous points : she is an only child, born in London but with a preference for country life,

a socially solitary girl by inclination who regards herself as not a typical pupil of her school, attracted to the 'hard sciences', and coming from a family with no experience of extended or higher education. The route she is currently pursuing offers the potential for moving to a more powerful position to challenge the terms of gender discourse, both occupationally and in the shaping of her personal life. Whether Eleanor will ultimately do so is another question, but again, the moratorium of extended education gives her more time and space than is afforded to most girls.

In sum, these three examples of well-managed transition biographies indicate sufficient congruence between individual identity, cultural resources and available structures of opportunity to allow the girls to construct futures whose demands they can fulfil and with which they feel personally comfortable. Melissa is not actively challenging, but she is making the best deal with the given; Patrice accepts the terms of her class culture and does not seek to cross occupational gender boundaries either, but she does challenge strongly on the domestic front; Eleanor is looking to cross both gender and class boundaries, both occupationally and domestically, and it is higher education which could give her the time and the resources to do so.

#### *6.6 Unfolding transitions : concluding commentary*

The patterns of gendered transitions explored in this study point to the general conclusion that the social reproduction of gender relations is characterised by processes of cumulative loading which take their cue from sensitive dependency upon initial conditions. The analysis attempts to capture a fraction of these complex dynamics as they operate for a specifically situated sample. (This does not imply that the patterns which have emerged are unique, but rather that they are not automatically generalisable to all girls.) The case studies show that it is the *ways in which* primary and secondary habitus *relate with each other* (rather than the absolute

qualities of each) that set the 'multidimensional field' in which girls construct their understandings and their plans. If we consider the girls' transition biographies (and the gender location trajectories which are one way of approaching these), the gradually increasing polarisation of perspectives and prospects is a disturbingly prominent feature. For many girls, the die is early cast: by the age of 14 at the latest, they are firmly educationally positioned to enter sectors of the training and labour markets which fix and reproduce their gender and class positions. In then turning to the construction of their domestic futures (which for many will come to appear as a new escape route from unsatisfying employment, just as the transition to paid work seemed to offer an escape route from unsatisfying schooling), they will find themselves ill-equipped to establish other than traditional patterns of the sexual division of labour. Few will be in a position to bargain with boyfriends-spouses (who will generally be earning more than they are) about the responsibilities of each for housework and childcare. This assumes, of course, that girls *want* more equality here, which most say they do. Girls recognise that it is both men's intransigence and difficulties in arranging childcare which lead inevitably to conventional solutions, given a context of differential earning power by sex. When they reach their mid-twenties, domestically overloaded and isolated at home with small children, many women again reach a point where the contradictions of their lives prompt crises of resistance and challenge.

Within this general picture of cumulative loading, complex dynamics and gradual polarisation, there are three further points which struck me forcefully in analysing the data from the follow-through study. They are, firstly, that a significant minority of the girls did show an interest of some kind at some stage in subjects and jobs culturally more closely associated with 'masculinity' than with 'femininity.' Secondly, personal accommodations to the terms of gender discourse do not occur independently of the official structuring of gendered transitions across the secondary school

years. Thirdly, educational selection/allocation mediates gender-specific educational-occupational channelling processes, transforming these into a legitimated process of elimination by achievement and correspondingly obscuring the underlying process of elimination by ascription. These three concluding points, which will once more be illustrated through the data, are thrown into particularly strong relief for those girls whose accounts expressed well the cross-tensions between gender, ethnicity/race and class membership to which they were exposed. It is the very complexity of the dynamics at hand which dictates continual return to the holistic data, since it is networks of relational significance which release an insight into how gendered transitions unfold across time.

Firstly, then, girls' interest in so-termed 'non-traditional' areas of study and work is by no means so slight as it seems (and see Appendix VI). This is a consequence of having longitudinal data and of the context in which these themes are discussed. These data reinforce the view that *not knowing or refusing to be pinned down to* what one wants to be is not a sign of girls' aimlessness, immaturity, wilful capriciousness, lack of serious commitment to a paid work role, and so forth. It rather signals felt tensions and resistance to patriarchal relations, just as voiced aspirations themselves frequently symbolise momentary attempts to resolve those tensions.

Teachers and careers officers, weighed down with the problems of youth unemployment in the mid-eighties, had little time for proactive counselling. They would have found Yvonne (3/1, Wilhelma) exasperatingly chameleon in her aspirations, at once aimless and wildly unrealistic. Had anyone found out that she was, for example, drawn to male-typed occupations such as an electrician or a glazier, it is likely that she would have been deflected, if only because of the enormity of the task of finding a local training opportunity for a black girl with poor formal qualifications. Yvonne's father's concern (as well as having to bring up seven children alone) was that she had

not, and 'would' not, turn into a 'proper' young woman. Yvonne herself swung dramatically between periodic assertions of her own real interests and taking cover under strong affirmation of traditional gender norms and values. So, for example, in the first interview (aged 14) she insisted she would never buy a daughter of hers a football, although at another point in the discussion, after offering a motley list of things she'd like to be, she added that "If girls could be footballers - that's what I'd like to be." A year later she returned to this, remarking that "Ever since I was little I wanted to do something with sport, and *since I can't I don't know what I want to be*" (my italics). Yvonne did not, by this time, expect to get a good job. She had accompanied her father on his numerous unsuccessful visits to the Job Centre, and her sister had by now left school into unemployment (and domesticity). The various part-time jobs Yvonne had already had on market stalls and in fast food joints did not promise good prospects. The jobs that were available were not the jobs of which she dreamed. She had learnt to produce what she thought to be both *acceptable and realistic* aspirations: in a travel agency, hairdresser, dressmaker. In the spring of her fifth year, in aimless desperation, she had gone off to see the 'old' Wilhelma careers teacher (cf. in text footnote to case study 3/3 earlier, p.264) for some practical help; by now, all she wanted was a job, and she remained deeply ambivalent about the kind of femininity 'work' itself seemed to demand from her:

"You see, I don't care what I do as long as I'm not out of work when I leave school....I wanted to be everything. But I don't know why I've just picked hairdressing....I don't want to do it....I just want to go straight from school into work....[I feel] stuck." (3/1/3)

"Every Thursday I have to dress up to get into the over-18s cinema....with my sister....That's what I'm scared about when I start work....you can't exactly wear trainers to go to work. I'm just scared....My dad says....most girls my age are going out all dressed up going to pubs. My mate's only 15 and she does that all weekend, the lot....All I'd have to do is to go home and put the things on - I've got them....He just says to me I ought to change. Be a different Yvonne....[subdued tone] Well, I've got to sooner or later." (3/1/3)

For those girls who are 'doing well' at school, however, lack of specific vocational direction is reinterpreted in more positive terms as openness of perspective. Transition to the labour market and 'serious adult life' is not of immediate moment: a moratorium beckons, one which of necessity must offer girls rather more space.

Given her broad-based high achievement levels and the congruency between family and school cultures, Frances (1/25, Sternrise) could look forward confidently to a smooth route on to higher education and a professional level occupation. Frances herself was aware that she was subject to channelling (she used this term spontaneously) but she did not see its gender-specificity. The combination of her parents' Canadian/Ghanaian backgrounds and their experiences in struggling to establish themselves economically and professionally lends a particular sharpness to Frances' adoption of a competitive and socially liberal individualism. She saw her parents, and so herself, as examples of how 'reasonable foreigners', people of colour and women should think and behave, in contrast with how such groups 'generally are'. Frances approached her future as an open project in which she was actively engaged in constructing. The route towards that future lay through higher education and a professional career. In this case, then, class and ethnic background dovetail with the cultivation by parents and teachers of high aspirations and achievement, producing a favourable context for her access to the moratorium of extended education. At 12, Frances hoped to become a solicitor, "but by the time I get to the third year I'll probably have changed my mind." Frances consciously and increasingly espoused an openness towards her occupational future, so that across time it became educational rather than occupational aspirations and qualification routes that occupied her thoughts. She came to see academic routes as opening options, vocational routes as closing them down, commenting at 14 that "I hate being restricted by anything" and emphasising that to fix one's sights on a specific occupation is not the best way forward. Frances underscored that all her classmates were thinking along

similar lines and that this was what her parents firmly favoured :

Q : So you've definitely decided to stay on after 16?

{laughs} "Well I haven't really got a choice!....But I'd also say education gives you a choice of what job you want to do. If you only stay for O-levels then that restricts you - you won't get a job that you like doing." (1/25/3)

When it came to option choice in 1986, Frances spent "hours" with her teachers and parents before making her final decisions: "I think if you look at it thoroughly my option choices were chosen by everybody else except me!" She herself was slightly concerned that all her choices were "academic" ones promising a lot of work. Her teachers, however, reassured her that she was "so bright" she had no need to worry; on the contrary, she was one of those fortunate enough to have *the widest choice because she was good at everything*. Frances certainly strove to fulfil everyone's expectations in her final range of 'choices' - but she simultaneously fashioned a gender-appropriate set, an interpretation, however, that she was keen to preempt by appeal to individualised free choice :

"....everybody says women should be up doing these things and they should be just like men, but....I really believe that some women do like doing just what they want to do. My form teacher really blew up [when I told her I wasn't taking physics]. But I've no desire in the whole of this earth to do physics, and it's not a stereotype or anything - 'cos I could do it if I wanted to do it. But to me you have to couple it with CDT and I don't like that, so I didn't do it. And with all this women's lib, I feel they are leaving the men out of it a bit. They seem to think that all women want to be like men. But some women do want to be housewives....In 70 years' time you're going to have people coming into school telling boys to take physics because the boys have all started doing housework."

Q : Aren't there any alternatives to women either 'being like men' or doing the 'traditional thing'?

"I think women should be themselves. They should have a choice - that's where women's lib is good, 'cos it gives you a choice, but you shouldn't be pushed into anything." (1/25/3)

The second point I want to highlight is that accommodations take shape gradually, and they parallel the channelling processes which regulate transitions across the



teenage years. It is when girls experience the constraining structures of transition closing in on them that they 'must' scale their life-plans into required and gender-appropriate proportion. For girls leaving full-time education at 16, the room for manoeuvre in this respect is very small. Lorraine (3/14, Dame's Trust), for example, saw herself both as unable to match her elder sister's achievements and as having gender-inappropriate interests (sciences and technical crafts) and aspirations (policewoman, engineer, technician). At school, she habitually protected herself with a sullen unresponsiveness, but once she had decided to trust us, Lorraine was visibly transformed into a lively, bright girl who was only too pleased to have the chance to talk freely. She came to the third interview (aged 16) seeking advice and support, using the opportunity to ask me about my life, curious about how women she saw as independent and in good jobs organise their lives. She herself was anxious and worried that she was drifting towards an unattractive and 'unsuccessful' future. At option choice, resisting the desire to conform, she had voluntarily chosen a second science, having switched to chemistry from an original decision to take child development (as her friends had all done). A year later, she had decided to take up a work experience placement at a local college to do building "but none of my friends was going there and I didn't want to be on my own," so she opted for chain store sales instead. The one certainty Lorraine had for her future was her rejection of secretarial work, and although she was well aware of the objective undesirability of 'women's jobs,' she did not possess an empowering explanation to link this with her own experiences. Disaffected, underachieving and still 'prevaricating' about her future as she turned 16, Lorraine's mother had insisted she begin an evening typing class "so I'll have something behind me." A secretarial job was the last thing she wanted, but given both her rejection of further education and the lack of positive support for developing her practical-technical interests, she had resigned herself to it: "But what else could I do?" she remarked with a cynical laugh.

Thirdly, gender-specific channelling processes importantly operate through progressive elimination by educational achievement. The first three years of secondary schooling prepare the ground, and then option choice functions brutally to separate those judged as able from those judged as less able (whatever the public fictions). This separation works in the first instance through the splitting into predominantly academic or practical-vocational patterns of subject choices, and then through a (gendered) hierarchy of 'academic' subjects. Teachers do not generally need to intervene; the pupils select themselves into the tracks, usually perfectly well-aware of their relative performance and its implications. The girls' accounts indicate that where pupils make the 'wrong' choices, teachers (and sometimes parents) intervene. The fourth and fifth years of secondary schooling see a new round of elimination, one which (at the time of this study) operated through the CSE/O-level distinction. These mechanisms affect both sexes, of course, but in qualitatively different ways.

Vivienne (3/21, Sternrise) at 14 was openly struggling with gender and class issues, both in relation to each other and as they were constituted in her educational milieu. Vivienne opposed and rejected what she saw as the dominant 'middle-class' culture of her school and 'A'-stream, an opposition which she transposed into gendered terms. She affirmed what she understood as 'masculine' class-based values and rejected 'feminine' school-based values. Vivienne's perspective was linked with her mother's divorce and remarriage to a man her daughter saw as an "arrogant" middle class interloper. Her sympathies lay with her unemployed father, brother and boyfriend's friends. By the spring of her fifth year the scales had tipped into intense loathing of her school. Her open resistance proceeded hand in hand with a sharp decline in achievement, leading her to relinquish her former hopes and to adopt an explicitly instrumental resolution to her situation. Her decision to become a chef (not a cook) symbolised her attempt to maintain her challenge to the terms of gender discourse without crossing class lines. In analogous manner, Vivienne consciously

refused to accede to the 'clothes and make-up' centred schoolgirl culture of femininity:

"There are two groups of girls in my class, girls like me and the ones who come in all toffed up, with gold chains, boasting about what they've just got bought and about their parents. They're always trying to get one step ahead of everyone else...They wear cashmere jumpers, nice flarey skirts, expensive stockings and shoes...They've got a better reputation with teachers...and their parents push them to do their homework. They sit in every night to do it - I couldn't stand it...I never talk to them, so I don't know what they want to do when they leave school...The boys don't separate out like that, they all muck in together - girls are bitches, that's the simple answer." (3/23/3) (11)

At 14, Vivienne had been open about her occupational future and unusually balanced in her option choices between the academic and the practical, sciences and humanities. One of the few girls to take CDT, she commented that the girls "have gone all la-di-da - instead of going all la-di-da I've gone all heavy!" At 15, she had set her sights on becoming a lawyer, but her opposition to the closely regulated teacher-pupil relations at Sternrise had already led to her relegation from O-level to CSE sets in several subjects; by the third interview in her fifth year, she was now taking but two O-levels : in home economics and in CDT. As a characteristic example, Vivienne had lost her temper with her English teacher, who insisted on punctuality and kept the whole class in if one pupil arrived late. The result was her relegation (on mutual agreement) to the CSE Mode 3 group, which had the status of the absolute bottom ability exam set, although English had been a subject in which she excelled. When her nerves finally failed her in the mock exams, Vivienne set about reconstructing her future within the social milieu that had provided the solidary, affirming relationships she had found neither in her own family nor at Sternrise.

I just flunked when I was sitting in that [exam] hall. I felt like a goldfish....[But] it's mostly my fault, if I hadn't rowed with the teachers I'd be doing 7 O-levels now....The worst thing about

school is that teachers think they are one step above the pupils....And the Headmaster! When he came in he asked me what I wanted to do, I said catering and he just patted me on the back and said 'well done, dear!'....I want to be a chef, though it sounds funny, because women ain't chefs, women are cooks! [laughs heartily] I don't agree with that - a cook is a scullery maid, upstairs downstairs stuff!...[I want a job with] the upper crust! I want to do haute cuisine stuff, not everyday cooking - lavish soups and bread rolls, not egg or sausage and chips...Like my boyfriend's mum, she's a silver service waitress and does a lot of posh banquets. (3/23/3)

Vivienne had also decided to settle down with her boyfriend. She would not be considering full-time further education because they wanted to start saving up for marriage and a house. The reorientation of her plans, both occupationally and domestically, crucially involved an instrumental reconciliation of class and gender conflicts. The occupational future Vivienne now planned for herself symbolised a delicate juggling act between the imperatives of gender/class relations and finding a space for her-self.

Vivienne's case illustrates how the social reproduction of patriarchal relations for working-class girls is regulated through educational selection and allocation, in that the potential for resistance and transformation is progressively restricted and curtailed through elimination practices. At each hurdle, failure implies re-routing back into labour market sectors circumscribed primarily by gender. Success implies the right to stay in the game for the next round. At every round the stakes are higher; fewer squeeze through and the pressures towards gender-specific specialisation become greater. In this context, gender discourse provides frameworks of orientation for the construction of personal biography.

These frameworks might be described through the concept of *Normalbiographie* (Levy, 1977) which refers to the bank of socially legitimated blueprints available to active subjects in constructing their lives. From this perspective, cultural codes are the ideological principles informing the blueprints, the internal logic of their pat-

terns. Subjects are not obliged to adopt such blueprints as orientational frameworks, but over time institutionalised mechanisms of social reproduction, operating routinely and concretely in educational systems, on the labour market, in the forms of family life, encroach and channel individuals towards legitimated and liveable niches. Individuals must accommodate the realities of their lives into explanatory frameworks which lend material constraints and possibilities a sense of rationality and personal desirability. As they do so, they generally find that their lives come to approximate to historically and culturally specific *Normalbiographien*. Free choice and self-realisation, in the sense that these terms are generally understood, do not guide the process of approximation and accommodation any more than gendered subjects engage in free-standing or 'genuine' occupational choice processes. Educational-occupational transitions are part of becoming a gendered subject and, as such, they are part of the construction of gendered social biography.

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#### Footnotes

1 Nine cases were not fully drawn into the trajectory analysis. Five of these were cases in which the 1984 interview data did not release a satisfactorily clear classification into the gender location categories. A further two had been allocated to those gender locations which were then not included in the semantic marker analysis (i.e. instrumentality and neo-conventionality). The final two were cases allocated to gender locations well represented in the follow-through sample, i.e. detailed analysis of these cases proved ultimately superfluous. Similarly, two cases were added to the follow-through sample to give more information for particular groups (middle class background; lower stream pupil).

2 Of the 8 respondents from Wilhelma, 5 are younger, 3 are older. Of the 9 from Dame's Trust, 3 are younger and 6 are older. The 8 girls from Sternrise are split equally by age and stream. 5 of the girls had been allocated in 1984 to preconsciousness; 3 to fatalism; 3 to avoidance; 4 to struggle; 3 to cultural apprenticeship; 3 to marginality; 3 to codebending; and one (of the subsequently added cases) to neo-conventionality.

3 Allocation to gender location could proceed on a more systematic basis for the second and third interviews, once the semantic marker categories had been developed and the contours of the gender locations identified in the sample had taken clearer shape. Information from the interviews was ordered under the relevant headings, so that for each respondent a carded sequence of data on the same theme and across three years was prepared. Continuities and discontinuities in response were therefore readily observable.

4 We cannot definitively conclude that these 11 girls did not move between gender locations over the period at

hand. Shifts may have taken place over the periods between the interviews, which were spaced at approximately twelve-month intervals. We can only conclude that the second and third interviews suggested allocation to the same location as the previous year. In any longitudinal study, the extent of and relations between change and stability are directly and inevitably linked to the pattern and frequency of data collection.

5 The 1984 distribution of girls across gender locations does differ somewhat by age-group. A higher proportion of the older girls than younger girls were allocated to non-transforming positions. We also know that the Sternrise first-year A-stream form is a 'notable' one, both in terms of pupil background features and teacher judgements. These factors suggest that cohort differences might be intervening in some way. For the purposes of the analysis at hand, however, an answer to this question is only of peripheral interest.

6 In fact, Melissa's trajectory is similar to Mandy's. Melissa was allocated to preconsciousness in 1984 and 1985; in 1986, approaching the end of her secondary schooling, she had begun to show signs of some critical reflection on gender divisions, and was therefore allocated to avoidance. In Table 6.4, she thus falls into the group of respondents with small-scale shift whose transitions prospects were favourable. Mandy remained located in fatalism for all three interviews. Both girls, in effect, exemplify the positive side of the coin of gender conformity.

7 This difference is all the more evident in the sense that the interviews did not directly seek information of this kind. Pupils are never disinclined to say what they think about their schools and their teachers in a context where they do not fear repercussions, so that the interviews were bound to pick up on such topics. What the girls from the three schools had to say and how they expressed their views differed, however.

8 This occupation calls up ambivalences both in relation to gender and to class membership. In the second (1985) interview Julie truculently remarked, after first saying that she simply wanted any job but would like to follow her sister into a bank, that she had not gone off the idea of the police force: "I'll probably become a policewoman just to spite my dad, 'cos he don't like them....He thinks they're animals and pigs....And Margaret Thatcher."

9 The visual style of girls from different backgrounds, at different schools, and in different forms would in itself offer the material for a cameo study. At Wilhelma, for example, the majority style was quite different from Melissa's. My interview notes for Aileen (1/1, case study in Chapter 4) at 14 in 1986 include the information that "she was wearing no make-up but an array of evidently cheap and fashionable clothes: a bright pink satin effect shirt gathered at the waist with a broad, chunky belt; Max Wall-style stretch trousers; a light jumper/jacket; bright jade blue flattish court shoes without socks or tights; rings and an imitation high-tech watch."

10 The introduction of GCSE is unlikely to remove this mechanism, given the differentiated subject syllabi and examinations. We might hypothesise that those subjects which are highly differentiated could emerge as the most 'important' subjects, and hence constitute markers for selection - or rather elimination - over the 14-16 period. The intervening or overriding effects of National Assessment Testing here are, as yet, wholly unknown.

11 This does not mean that Vivienne flouted school uniform rules or had adopted an 'outrageous' style; she had a perfectly unremarkable appearance and dress in these respects. It was simply that she neither coiffed her hair, nor applied make-up, nor wore fashion clothes for school. Outside school, Vivienne had an active social life which included discos and pubs, for which she dressed accordingly.

## Conclusions

This study originated in a recurring irritation that theories of occupational choice and empirical studies of adolescent girls simply did not engage with each other. Whilst the theoretical literature lacked vitality, contemporary studies of youth transitions have taken occupational placement as read and occupational choice as of peripheral interest. For my part, I was interested in tracing the processes (rather than the outcomes) of the social reproduction of gender relations at the interface between education and paid work. The structuring of that transition through selection and allocation in schooling and on the labour market is not in question. In this sense, there is little real choice for many young people about the kind of jobs they come to do. At the same time, studies of adolescent girls continued to find that their aspirations match women's destinations : a narrow range of female-staffed and female-typed occupations. How did girls come to be positioned and to position themselves in this way? It seemed to me that occupational choice must be material to an understanding of the processes of social reproduction and, potentially, change. In the first place, such decisions signify a point of critical transition both in personal biography and for social organisation. In the second place, the structure/agency problematic is integral to the concept of occupational choice. These considerations suggested that a focus on occupational choice as a socially and culturally embedded process rather than a discrete determining or determined event could contribute to a regeneration of the topic.

My concerns, then, have been directed towards the study both of gendered transitions and of general theoretical problems. The specific tasks I set myself were to explore the sets of meanings which inform and shape occupational choice processes, and to describe the circumstances in which particular kinds of gendered transition biographies unfold. Occupational choices are thus embedded in the wider processes

of transition; this facilitates a perspective in which active subjects grapple with the structured tensions and contradictions contained and expressed in what I have called the reference network of gender discourse. The forms and the dynamics of gender divisions change across time and space, specificities which are expressed through the modalities of gender relations that set the frameworks of constraint and possibility under given circumstances. The term gender location thus describes the spaces in which girls are positioned between social reproduction and potential transformation, between accession and reformulation, in the transition to social and personal womanhood.

The GAOC project was designed, *inter alia*, to pursue the concerns I have restated here. The data collected by survey and interview in 1983/4 provided the input which spurred my thinking further; at this stage, I made an intuitive jump between empirical material and theoretical formulation. In the search for classification principles to use in designing the follow-through interview study, I began to think more systematically in terms of cultural codes and discourse as these might be specified to analyse gender relations. This was the origin of the model that I have developed through this thesis. The task of analysis has been to fill the gap originally bridged by intuition, a process which has very much contributed to the further clarification of the model (which is by no means a finished product). The empirical exploration of these ideas has been positively assisted by the quality and range of data provided by the GAOC project. The study was economically designed to provide quantitative and qualitative data on a cross-sectional and longitudinal basis. The sampling and data collection patterns offered a number of opportunities for internal comparison and control, through systematic sampling procedures, overlapping groups of respondents, and independently assembled information. The schools themselves were not, however, selected either randomly or at will, although they were intended to be broadly similar in their character as inner city



working class comprehensives. In the event, it has been the very differences between the three schools as social-educational milieux that has contributed a valuable dimension to the analysis. The fact that GAOC was also an action research project, which meant that the research team had extended and close context with the schools involved, was of particular benefit in this respect.

The model of the modalities of gender relations that I have used is a structural one in which the concept of transition inserts a dynamic. The three levels of the model link cultural meaning systems, social circumstance and biography in order to understand what it is that girls are 'doing' as they negotiate a path through secondary schooling and towards the labour market and adult life. In this approach, the term 'career' is now used differently from the sense in which it has routinely been employed in occupational sociology or in the vocational guidance literature. The (gendered) career is a trajectory through social space, contextualised through specialised gender habitus. It assumes a constant dialectic between structure and agency, which unfolds in the social construction of biography. The transforming potential of tensioned patterns of choice and circumstance can be held in check in a number of ways. The power of sacrificial femininity as a vocation and the ways in which understandings of production/reproduction relations are shaped by experience and milieu are two central ideologically informed means for accomplishing the social reproduction of gender relations as opposed to their potential transformation.

Empirically, this study uses data from a primarily working class sample, situated specifically - in mid-eighties metropolitan London. It cannot, and does not, claim to be able to describe the full range of girls' positionings and experiences. Rather, the analysis draws attention to internal differentiations between working class circumstance and perspectives; and it suggests that these differentiations are not idiosyncratic. At the same time, my purpose has been to lay the groundwork for a more

general perspective and model of gendered transitions, whose theoretical and empirical development lies in the future. I now want to draw this thesis to a close by summarising some of the main points arising from the study and by raising some problematic issues inherent in the work. Together, these offer considerable scope for future research.

Most girls' occupational worlds are very partial in their spectrum of coverage, and they are also highly gendered in quality. The urban working class girls studied here used a 'vocabulary' of not much more than 200 or so jobs, and this vocabulary was proportionately gendered in the same way as the occupational structure itself is divided between a majority of jobs primarily/wholly staffed by men, and a minority staffed by women or by both sexes. Girls' personal constructions generally modify this 'real' world by drawing disproportionately upon the fewer 'women's jobs' that are in their vocabulary, to produce an occupational world that is rather more 'gender-balanced' (effectively, more feminine). However, age and schooling context appear to influence these patterns. The older (third-year) girls in this study 'amended' their worlds in this way more than younger (first-year) girls did; but this difference was not so noticeable at Sternrise, the school which catered in particular to the social and educational orientations of the upwardly aspiring 'new' working class and the achieved professional middle class. It is impossible to separate the parts independently played by primary and secondary habitus in shaping the quality and the pace of what we might call 'processes of gendered closure'. The data in this study would not, in any event, be capable of doing so. The patterns of confluence are really what interest us, however. Given their complexity, the most fruitful means of grasping their kaleidoscopic quality is through a systematic range of case studies, such as those included in Chapter 6.

We know little about the relative contributions of symbolic and real labour market

factors in shaping girls' aspirations, though it is clear that their expectations are guided by very concrete assessments of educational potential and labour market opportunities. Two-fifths of the younger girls and half of the older girls already thought they would not get the kind of job they wanted to have when they left school. They were very much aware of the high levels of youth and adult unemployment in the mid-eighties, so that they expected competition for the more desirable kinds of jobs to be stiff. On the other hand, girls very commonly said that they did not want to continue their education (by which they meant schooling as they were experiencing it) any more than they had to, although as time went on, the older girls became reconciled to taking further education courses at school or college as a preferable option to being on the dole. The extent to which (even first-year) girls saw themselves as lacking in the talents and skills they perceived to be necessary for the occupations to which they aspired is worrying, especially in the light of the low level of informational knowledge they had in these areas.

Over time, it was only girls who had been allocated to the potentially transforming gender locations of marginality and codebending who did not drop the level of their aspirations, and for whom the gap between aspirations and expectations was narrower or non-existent, in that since they expected to continue with their education they were not compelled to consider the realities of labour market opportunities. These were girls who were doing well at school, whose families expected them to achieve and to set their sights high, and who subscribed to meritocratic individualism as both philosophy and instrument of success and gender equality. In general, however, girls did scale down their aspirations, especially between their first and third year of secondary schooling. During this period they came to see themselves as able, average or not very 'good' at schoolwork, both generally and in relation to given school subjects; and during this period they developed strong engagement with or incipient disengagement from schooling. Option choice at 14

certainly fixes the course of education-work transitions quite firmly, since most girls did choose their subject options with their current aspirations and expectations in mind. Principles of curriculum balance and openness of educational-occupational perspective were only applied to and by those girls who were doing well academically. For most of the older girls in the study, expectations increasingly replaced aspirations, with the effect that the range of their projected futures narrowed down even further into a few female-dominated occupations.

Just under a third of the aspirations ever mentioned by the 61 girls in the interview sample could be called 'non-traditional' for their gender; and 40% (N=49) of the survey sample aspired to an occupation mentioned by no other respondent. These figures suggest a potential range and quality of girls' aspirations (and, ultimately, perhaps expectations too) that is much wider and less gender-typed than is realised in practice. However, as a frequency distribution, the stereotypical nature of these girls' aspirations continues to dominate the picture. Again, the aspirations of 13/14 year olds were even more clustered on a few classically women's jobs than were those of 11/12 year olds, which amongst other things reflects the gradual transformation of aspirations into expectations (which are then adjusted to, and represented, as aspirations). Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the degree of gender-typed clustering of aspirations right through the sample and from the outset of study. I have suggested that we can usefully approach this problem through occupational semantics, in which occupations are seen as composed of different ideological elements which define their cultural character and meaning. Occupations can be defined in terms of the way they 'carry' elements of the culture of femininity, itself differentiated in the way it is constructed and impacts upon the lives of women from different class/ethnic backgrounds and their internally differentiated or cross-cutting 'cultural fractions.' It is in this sense that occupational choices, embedded in historically specific contexts, have not only material but also symbolic significance.

Regardless of what parents and teachers may say to encourage girls that equal opportunities prevail and that they should fashion their hopes and plans without reference to their gender, observation and interpretation tell most girls that the world is organised rather differently. At the point of closest knowledge and experience, the girls in this study are faced with a virtually completely sex-segregated occupational structure and labour market. With very few exceptions indeed (teachers, publicans), there was no overlap between the kinds of jobs girls' mothers and fathers had. All employed mothers were found in a very restricted range of occupational categories and most were in 'women's jobs' at the lowest levels of the pay and status hierarchy (regardless of the jobs they had had before having children). Fathers were, as to be expected, spread more widely in range and level, although there were school differences, reflecting the differing communities and constituencies the schools attracted. Those girls with elder siblings could also see that these had all entered highly gender-appropriate fields of education/training and employment. Somewhat under a third of elder siblings had experienced some form of post-sixteen education or training, but two-thirds of these were elder brothers, most of whom had found an apprenticeship in a skilled trade. The girls in this study had no immediate source of *same-sex* information or role models for venturing beyond female-dominated and female-typed jobs. A third of elder sisters were employed in routine secretarial/clerical work; two-fifths worked in the same kind of jobs as their mothers, at the lowest levels of service and casual employment. The girls did know, though, that elder sisters had been more successful in finding and keeping jobs since leaving school than had their brothers. The rational decisions to make are to look for similar kinds of employment, especially since the kinds of jobs they generally see their fathers and brothers doing are not intrinsically appealing. The high-achieving working class girls and the few middle class girls in this study were not faced with making such decisions at this stage of their lives. In the first

instance, they were oriented towards education; and in the second instance towards higher qualification sectors of the occupational structure. These sectors they regarded as less gender-segregated to begin with, and they believed either that meritocratic criteria govern access and career progress, or that the only way to overcome residual discrimination against women is to demonstrate super-competence and determination. Occupational segregation by sex may be a problem for sociologists, then, but from the perspective of most girls in this study it is of rather peripheral and abstract interest.

The discussion so far highlights the broad similarities of circumstance and perspective amongst the girls in this study, but equally as important to the analysis are the internal differentiations between them. The circumstances and resources with which girls are equipped influence the ways in which their understandings of the social world take shape. In particular, the complex intersections between gender, race/ethnicity and class fashion differently structured meaning contexts as well as different qualities of possibilities and constraints for constructing one's future. Specifically, girls come to describe and explain gendered divisions of labour in production and reproduction in rather different ways; these understandings can be used as a guide to the kinds and intensities of tensions and contradictions they face and how they are trying to resolve these in their own lives. The combination of circumstances and understandings produces a set of positionings within gender discourse with varying potential for considering and enacting alternatives. What counts as an alternative depends to some extent on where one is standing; a number of alternatives may be more or less socially legitimated, but others will be literally unthinkable. The gender locations which are used in this study to describe girls' positionings within gender discourse imply partial insights into women's subordination, which seem to offer different degrees and kinds of potential for resistance and challenge. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that some girls in this study had

few positive resources to foster and support the development of a critical consciousness of gender relations. It is equally so that many girls had particular sets of resources rather than varying amounts of resources, and that cross-pressures are important in critically sharpening girls' understandings. Paradoxically, minority girls may therefore have the most potential for sustained resistance and challenge - given that they are not either demoralised or selected out during schooling (see here Epstein, 1972; Fuller, 1980; Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Sharpe, 1976; Tomlinson, 1983). Similarly, the contrasts between the middle class codebenders and the working class marginals were important for gaining insight into their differently constituted struggles, in which it is the latter group who are more likely to be pushing against the boundaries of occupational gender divisions. Once oriented towards occupations which lie beyond the territory of class cultural origin, the established boundaries between women's and men's work and worlds no longer exercise the same force. But both groups of girls were highly individualistic, leading them to deny the significance of socially based explanations of gender inequalities and to place their trust in personal talent and initiative for achieving their aims in life. This was very different from the perspectives of cultural apprentices, who valued and relied on the family, kin and community for organising and making sense of their future lives. Here, gender inequalities were approached in the knowledge that women's worlds and qualities are positive, not deficient in some way, and can provide emotional sustenance and practical support regardless of what men think and do. This 'cultural separation' between women's and men's worlds strengthens the development of critical consciousness in some ways, especially in relation to the family, but it does not connect well with the problems of gender divisions in the labour market.

Whilst the analysis applied to the interview data threw gender locations into distinctive relief, the features of individual locations are not equally strongly marked off from each other in every case. The *similarities* between the girls' situations can

be seen readily and with some confidence. Searching for *internal differentiations* requires much more analytic delicacy; and we inevitably run the risk of misrecognising idiosyncratic features as characteristic and meaningful. So, for example, the patterns and quality of response may have been influenced by interviewer differences in style and coverage. (This was the reason for holding interviewer constant at the outset of the analysis process, of course.) Given the sample size, particularly for the follow-through study, collapsing the girls into two broad groups according to their positioning within the weaker/stronger sectors of gender discourse was the most appropriate way forward. This simpler division marks the extent (i.e. less so/more so) to which girls had reached and voiced a critical consciousness of gender relations.

In the same way, the distinguishing features of the gender locations identified in this study can also be approximated and simplified into contrasts. On the one hand, we have girls who are 'locals' in their socio-spatial orientation; on the other, we have 'cosmopolitans.' There are girls whose knowledge of, access to and use of role models and sources of information/advice is both curtailed and but reactive; others are proactive and can call on a range of sources. Some girls look towards their kin in these respects, others to school/teachers; some use both sets of resources, others neither. The patterns of educational and occupational choices girls display over time split into those who produced few aspirations over a narrow range, and those who had a number of ideas (consecutively and simultaneously) which were drawn from a wider range of the occupational structure. Some girls never voiced any other than normatively gender-appropriate aspirations; others had a much more mixed range of ideas, although the willingness with which they expressed their 'less conventional' choices and the 'survival' of such ideas over time varied. All girls could describe the division of labour between the sexes, but they varied in the clarity and accuracy of their descriptions as far as the labour market was concerned. Similarly,



the extent to which both horizontal *and* vertical dimensions of the division of labour by sex were salient for the girls varied too. Their interpretations of gender relations as power relations in which women are subordinate were linked with the natures of their descriptions and explanations for the division of labour by sex, producing differently shaded accounts of production/reproduction relations as either fixed or shapeable elements of life. This series of contrasts highlight different aspects of what I have termed origins, resources, understandings and realisations, all of which are socially engendered but are individually experienced and expressed. In an alternative formulation, Brannen (1990) has captured these qualities through the concept of network. The young mothers she studied could be seen to be positioned within networks which she termed truncated, close and differentiated. She argued that it is differentiated networks which engender alternative ideas and practices for understanding and shaping one's life. The features and implications of networks can also be read from the series of contrasts between the girls in this study. So, for example, those with truncated networks are likely to be found in non-transforming positions, those with close networks would include girls located in cultural apprenticeship, and those with differentiated networks are more likely to be found in potentially transforming positions.

The data from the follow-through study point to processes of polarisation and attrition over the course of the secondary schooling years. Firstly, the girls separate out into those who reach (or never depart from) a stability of perspective on gender relations early on in this period, and those who embark on or continue with an active, tensioned engagement with gender discourse. This second group, characteristically those subject to particularly sharp cross-pressures, juggle with different ways of understanding and explaining gender relations in the context of their own unfolding transitions biography. Secondly, girls separate out into those whose education-employment transitions prospects look poor or which deteriorate across the sec-

ondary years, and those who can construct more favourable outcomes. These outcomes may include the retention of openness about their future possibilities, the successful matching of aspirations to achievement and specialisation tracks, and securing a sought-after access and entry route into the youth labour market. Wallace's (1987) Isle of Sheppey study of working class 16-21 year olds suggests that these polarisation processes continue through to the establishment of adult status and lifestyle. She observed an emerging split between those young women who, by 21, are married, securely employed and owner-occupiers - and those who had not acquired all of these markers of adult status (though most both recognised and wanted to acquire them). Those young women who had been able to establish themselves in the labour market after leaving school and had found 'good' employment became more rather than less committed to a life-style in which two full-time earners worked together to provide themselves and their (projected) children with a materially comfortable home and standard of living. Nevertheless, the breadwinner/homemaker distinction was retained in principle; and given that the jobs young women had were lower paid and 'less skilled' than those of their partners, it would be difficult to realise counter-reproductive ways of life even had they been 'thinkable' and desirable. Those girls in the current study who were facing favourable transition prospects between education and employment are those who would probably go on to populate such legitimated and liveable niches.

Assuming that the potential for development of critical consciousness of gender relations arises out of the relational complex of circumstance and experience, it is unsurprising to find that those girls who were allocated throughout to the weaker sector of gender discourse were also very likely to be those who were most vulnerably placed for educational-occupational transitions. Such girls are also more likely to be found at Wilhelma School, where educational experience makes little impact on the straightforward reproduction of gender and class disadvantage.

Additionally, however, whilst cross-pressures may foster critical consciousness, they may equally place girls in conflict with schooling as a cultural context and as a set of institutionalised selection and allocation processes, leaving them with fewer positive educational-occupational options post-sixteen. In the end, it is engagement with and success at school which gives girls access to a moratorium of tolerance and space through extended education. However, there were few girls at the schools in this study who were likely to continue with their general education after 16, though more would be taking vocationally-related courses of some kind - all of which would lead them into female-staffed labour market sectors. Only at Sternrise would we find a sizeable group of girls who expect to continue through to higher education, and by this time the free play of subject specialisation will have removed much of the openness they were concerned to retain at 14.

In conclusion, I want to reflect on some unresolved points that arise from the nature of this study and the arguments it makes. Firstly, it might be argued that age-related cognitive and maturational development processes are of some moment in a study of early adolescent girls which explores not simply what they do but focusses on how they make sense of their worlds. Oerter (1988), for example, argues that cognitive development is implicated in the competence for critical thought, by which he means the ability to think dialectically and hence to decode meaning structures. Certainly there are individual differences between the responses of girls in this study for which it would be implausible not to accord a role to social-cognitive development factors. However, contemporary interdisciplinary youth studies has long since explicitly rejected the *Sturm und Drang* approach to adolescence, on the basis that age is an intrinsically social category whose meanings and internal divisions are historically and culturally specific (cf. Krüger, 1988; Breyvogel, 1989). Similarly, maturation processes are defined and understood differently across time and space (and are not independent of other axes of social differentiation, cf. Appendix I on occupational

choice theories here). Few would therefore disagree with the view that social origins, cultural context and educational experience exercise material effects on these processes, whose pace and sequencing are normatively defined. It is for these reasons that I proposed the preconsciousness gender location might be regarded as a universal location of origin, from which girls move at different times and rates. Also, positionings in gender discourse may well need to be interpreted bearing in mind the point at which girls take them up. The transitional location of avoidance is a good example. It represents a point of entry into transitional space for girls shifting away from non-transforming positions, but equally it may mark a point of shift towards greater accommodation for girls slipping away from potentially transforming positions.

I did in fact initially assume that some indication of a developmental sequence would emerge from the analysis of the longitudinal interview data. I supposed that girls' perspectives on gender relations would conform to some kind of sequential pattern with multiple outcomes. But the data suggested much more fragmented patterning, which did not align with age-stage in any neat way. Rather, the dead weight of social disadvantage and its educational consequences unrelentlessly pressed its claims upon the data. Girls in broadly similar circumstances constructed broadly similar accounts of gender relations, and those who were less critically conscious at the outset of the study had not become more so two years later. On the other hand, patterns of gendered closure in *occupational* worlds, aspirations and expectations are observable both from the cross-sectional survey comparisons and in the longitudinal interview case studies. These processes are less marked for girls who are 'doing well' at school, and for those where 'doing well' academically is emphasised in both primary and secondary habitus contexts. *Educationally*, however, gender specific subject preferences and specialisation come to dominate for these groups too, despite the concern for keeping all routes open at 14.

Perhaps the extent of stability and fragmentation is no more than is to be expected given the nature of the data. The three interviews in the follow-through study could take in three years of secondary schooling, but between first and third interviews lay only two calendar years. This is a short time for studying such a complex topic, if incomparably better than cross-sectional investigation. But apart from this difficulty, there is a sense in which the empirical work presented here serves a dual purpose. It is of value for its close description of a specifically situated group of girls, their circumstances, their perspectives and the courses of their gendered transitions. The analysis, however, has been explicitly turned towards the exploration of a fledgling model which would like to cover a wider remit. The data do not permit an exploration of all possible positionings at the historical-contingent level, but only some of these; and yet I have tried to ground a mapping of the field of gender discourse through what I know to be partial information. I think it could be argued that the analysis has delivered a set of plausible positions, but that the relations between these positions are unclear: the findings offer a workable (partial) typology but do not 'sit well' in their posited field, which itself remains underexplicated.

The most unsatisfactory aspect of this partial typology centres on the conceptual distinction between positions and resolutions. The measure of the problem was insistently exposed in trying to understand the classification system conceptually in its application to a longitudinal dataset, which required repeated allocations across time. Essentially, if girls do not move beyond positions, does this mean these become resolutions, and if so, what is then the difference between positions and resolutions? An empirical answer to this question might be proposed to be available through research which covers a longer timespan altogether. Conceptually, the problem is not readily resolvable within the present formulation of the model. One alternative is to think of positions and resolutions as distinguished by their combination of (critical) reflection and action, in terms of an explicitly voiced set of decisions and the

rationale which lies behind them. Another alternative is to attempt to visualise positions and resolutions as capable of transforming their character across time, so that from the perspective of social biography positions become resolutions, resolutions become positions, and so on. The ultimate problem with the argument of this thesis, at least at the historical-contingent level, is that the types it seeks to explicate are infinitely complex and are composed of partially entwined, never ending strands. This renders the task of isolating their patterns not only very difficult but perhaps not necessarily useful, at least in the sense sociological analysis customarily approaches such a task.

There is no satisfactory answer to these theoretical inadequacies except to recognise that they pose considerable scope for further thinking and research. An immediate empirical issue is to consider not only how differently socially situated groups of girls would extend and modify the analysis, but also how this kind of approach to occupational choice processes could be addressed to understanding boys' gendered transitions. Methodologically, the next task might be to conduct a study specifically designed to test the clarity and firmness of the positions themselves, using the procedures of analysis which were developed in the current study. This would imply an examination of the reliability of the features of gender locations, whereas my purpose so far has simply been, as far as the data have allowed, to attempt their explication. My personal inclination, however, is to turn more attention to the levels of transitional dynamics and of cultural semantics by undertaking some research into occupational socialisation processes. This offers the opportunity to consider how gendered and occupational identities and practices intersect to produce subjects 'suited' or 'unsuited' to their jobs.

We might, then, regard the gender locations as a typology of specialised *habitus*, which are patterned against each other along a number of dimensions, some of

which are clearer than others. They try to capture the confluence of circumstance and perspective, whereas the concept of transition attempts to capture agency in the dynamics of the gendered career. This raises the question of the relationships between the three levels of the model as a whole. These relationships remain at the level of assertion rather than of explication, and the empirical analysis does not offer a balanced and comprehensive investigation of each of the levels themselves. It is largely theoretical speculation fed by reflection on a range of research, including this study, which informs the level of cultural semantics in relation to occupations and femininity. Historical-contingent positionings have been mapped and analysed in some detail, using different sources of data from the study. Empirical description, in the form of transition biographies, has provided a basis for observation of the dynamics of gendered careers. At the very least, then, these imbalances of focus and exploration across the levels need to be rectified. However, the fundamental theoretical question of the genesis of social change can be addressed only through a better understanding of the relationships between these levels. In this sense, the structure/agency problematic remains as intractable a question for me as it did when I began.

The dynamics of the model depend upon a concept of the active subject, for otherwise the gendered career is nothing but intelligent puppetry. I am here less concerned with the nature and development of subjectivity per se, but rather in conceptualising the possibility of agency despite the force of circumstance. I have tried to think of this in terms of differently structured spaces, or partial fractures, that open up potential 'windows' to critical insight as a consequence of the contradictions and cross-pressures to which specifically situated girls are exposed in different ways and to differing extents. Such windows bring what Ardener (1975) has termed the 'muted structures' of women's versions of social reality into sharper focus, through which girls might be empowered to actualise more of their own visions and less of

those carried in Bourdieu's embodied structures. One difficulty in this study has been, then, to imagine the possibility of windows for some girls, given the circumstances of their lives and schooling. Another has been the apparent inexorability with which the institutionalised structuring of gendered transitions reproduces occupational segregation by sex, whatever the shape of girls' visions and their struggles to realise these. With apologies to Goethe, this is the corpse which haunts the sociological imagination in its search for the elusive life and soul of the party.



## Appendix I

### Perspectives on occupational choice : a brief note (1)

In the early seventies Mansfield (1973, p.111) could reasonably claim that there existed a considerable sociological and psychological theoretical and research literature on occupational choice. (Social) psychological perspectives had dominated the field through to the mid-sixties. Subsequently, sociological perspectives rose to intellectual ascendancy, culminating in Roberts' (1968) 'opportunity-structure' model, in which the 'myth of occupational choice' is replaced by the structural determination of the 'entry into employment'. Further debate seemed superfluous, and the study of occupational choice has since stagnated.

Generously funded psychological research into the problems of transition to civilian life for the U.S. veterans of World War II and the Korean War had spearheaded the formulation of the so-termed 'classic developmental stage models' of occupational choice and 'vocational maturity' (Ginzberg et al., 1951; Super, 1957). Their practical value lay in the promise of assistance for employers in efficient talent-spotting and smooth transitions. Through to the early sixties, virtually full (male) employment made occupational choice unproblematic in the sense that all were 'spoilt for it'; in a buoyant labour market, individual mistakes were rectifiable.

Ginzberg (e.g. 1963, 1971) and Super (e.g. 1968, 1981) have retained their centrality in the field (cf. van Dyke, 1986), but they have not significantly changed their formulations over the years. Both see occupational choice (Ginzberg) or vocational maturity (Super) as the ultimate outcome of a series of interim decisions, having identified stages that people must go through en route. The occupational choice process is viewed developmentally, and as logically related to maturation processes between childhood, adolescence and adulthood. However, 'youth' is as much a

social construction as are other age-stages: its character is historically and culturally specified, and it is equally gender, race and class differentiated (cf. here Cohen, 1986; Gillis, 1974, 1987; McRobbie and Nava, 1984). Developmental models also imply the possibility of 'getting stuck', effectively *remaining (normatively) immature*. Unsurprisingly, in such accounts it is both *all* women and *working-class* young men who were 'deficient' in this sense - a deficiency linked to femininity as 'childlike', and to the lower classes as morally degenerate (cf. for example, Breyvogel, 1987; Ehrenreich and English, 1979; Pearson, 1983; Walkowitz, 1985). Esland (1980, pp. 263-4) notes that Ginzberg himself (1970) became critically aware of how the essential individualism of psychological theory encouraged a fundamentally conservative vocational counselling practice by emphasising the aim of adjustment to the world as it is, i.e. to labour market needs. These critical insights never led to a reconsideration of structured social inequalities and occupational choice, despite an early reminder from Blau et al. (1956) that structural features of the labour market placed absolute limits on people's opportunities to choose freely and thereby achieve 'self-actualisation'.

Psychological perspectives came largely from the USA. The later sociological perspectives on occupational choice were British in origin. Williams (1974) reprints the relevant sequence of papers that appeared in the Sociological Review across the sixties. Sofer's introduction to the volume highlights the problematic convention of using the term 'choice' in relation to education-employment transitions and underlines the importance of social and economic forces as shapers of occupational aspirations and destinations.

The chronological sequence of Williams' collection follows the evolution of the debate. Early empirical concern with the patterns of class inequalities prompted attempts to insert theoretical coherence by taking socialisation as a core concept (cf.

Keil et al., 1966/1974). Musgrave (1967/1974) boldly extended the argument by asserting the absence of any *sociological* theory of occupational choice and proposing that life-long socialisation processes within the framework of (US inspired) role theory provided the way forward. Coulson et al.'s (1967/1974) rejoinder castigated Musgrave's own lack of sociological perspective, which, in their view, must address the realities of inter-group conflict rather than the fiction of normative consensus. Roberts' (1968/1974) and Allen's (1968/1974) papers were identified by Sofer (op.cit.) as the volume's 'most radical' on account of their 'Marxist-type' perspectives. Sheila Allen's account was not taken up in the literature; but her insistence that education-work transitions operated firmly within a broader set of class-differentiated structural conditions affecting every aspect of life, and that young people's aspirations are indeed rational given the objective conditions of their lives, has found a reformulated echo in the youth transitions literature.

Roberts was interested in demonstrating the validity of a structurally determinist theory of occupational choice : young people aspire to the jobs they assess themselves able to enter given the concrete opportunities open to them. A decade later (1977), he reaffirmed his position in arguing that the room thus left in which careers advisors might manoeuvre is small. Counselling practice must act accordingly, so that attempting to broaden horizons and encourage self-actualisation may produce young people less able to adjust to the world as it is. This recommends precisely the kind of practice that Ginzberg had come to identify as problematic (cf. p.302). Models such as Roberts' replace over-voluntarism with over-determinism; the scope for active and individual struggle within contradiction has at best a marginal status. They ignore the ways in which people constructively try to come to terms with the world as it is : the black boxes remain locked, yet it is their contents which are most interesting.

The sociological horizon of the seventies was dominated by macro-level theorising about inequality juxtaposed with a proliferation of ethnographic cultural studies. In the eighties, youth transitions and education-employment links became research and policy growth areas in the light of unemployment and overt socio-political dissent amongst young people. The resulting literature falls into three groups. Firstly, there are the earlier studies of youth transitions in terms of school-to-work (e.g. Jenkins, 1983; Roberts, 1984; Watts, 1983) or youth subcultures and lifestyle (e.g. Brake, 1980, 1985; Hall and Jefferson, 1976; Hebdige, 1979; Mungham and Pearson, 1976). As with the classic example of the genre, Willis' Learning to Labour (1977), their prime focus is theoretically upon class and empirically upon males. Only since the mid-eighties has this kind of writing begun to place race/ethnicity at the centre of attention (see Cohen and Bains, 1987; Solomos, 1988; Troyna, 1987). Very little links race with gender (but see Arnot, 1985; Fuller, 1982; Mac an Ghaill, 1988).

A second body of writing does take gender relations and female experience as its major concerns, but its perspectives are not built around education-employment transitions as such (e.g. Lees, 1986; McRobbie, 1978a, 1978b; McRobbie and Nava, op.cit.; articles in Deem, 1980). The organising concept here is primarily the culture of (adolescent) femininity.

Thirdly, there is a small, growing group of studies which look directly at gendered education-work transitions, beginning from Griffin's (1985) Typical Girls? (the 'companion' study to Willis, op.cit.). Gender divisions in the newly-refurbished 'transitions system' of vocational education and training have attracted considerable attention (e.g. Bates, 1989; Buswell, 1986, 1988; Cockburn, 1987; Millman, 1985). The newer youth transitions literature has begun to explore both the interconnectedness of social divisions and the internal differentiations within class groupings and between women/men (e.g. Aggleton, 1987; Brown, 1987; Chisholm, 1990;

Coffield et al., 1986; Wallace, 1986, 1987). None of these studies are directed towards occupational choice processes, though they are relevant in regenerating their study.

In conclusion, it is reasonable to acknowledge the insights which emerge from the 'conventional' literature on occupational choice. Incrementally, these might be summarised thus : firstly, occupational choice is a process, not a discrete event. Secondly, this process operates under sharply varying limiting conditions - human agency and material circumstance are intertwined. Thirdly, the personal and social conditions under which occupational choices are made articulate with structured social inequalities. The specific cultural contexts and circumstances in which social groups are embedded furnish the grounds for the decisions they make. Educational-occupational transitions are thus an exemplar for the mechanisms of social reproduction. The value of these points has been constrained by two fundamental shortcomings : either (over) voluntaristic or (over) determinist analyses; and overwhelming predication upon white middle class (latterly also working class) male ideal-type life patterns (see here Holland (1980) and Speakman (1980) for critical reviews).

Voluntaristic perspectives are unable to offer adequate explanations of the articulations of systems of social inequality with occupational choices and destinations. They can tell us little about black, about female, about class fraction linked experiences and strategies for coming to terms with real worlds. On the contrary, what the *majority* of people do simply does not 'fit' the terms of the models, which explains why so many samples were restricted for so long to middle class white males. In contrast, placing opportunity structures at the centre of attention, as determinist analyses have done, certainly enables the facts of (for example) gender-based inequality and exclusion from a wide range of occupations to be taken properly into account. Girls' occupational choices are indeed directly related to a rational assessment of their chances on the labour market and with employers. However, it

is equally true that 'women's' occupations are typically overcrowded and attract low pay, bad conditions and poor promotion prospects. Girls are not unaware of these difficulties. Yet most continue to settle for a narrow range of female-dominated, gender-appropriate jobs. Determinist perspectives can explain these patterns only by recourse to a view of women as either over-socialised and passive, or non-rational, or both. Women thus slide into the category of those who helplessly collaborate in their own oppression. Alternatively, women represent those who choose to value family duties and/or the social qualities of the workplace over pay, conditions and self-actualisation, i.e. back to sacrificial femininity. It is clearly time to move on.

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(1) A full version of the critical review undertaken here is available in Chisholm (1987).

## Appendix II

The interview sample: aliases and case numbers

| <u>Case No.</u> | <u>Text alias</u> | <u>Case No.</u> | <u>Text alias</u> |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1/1             | Aileen            | 3/1             | Yvonne            |
| 1/2             | Maxine            | 3/2             | Kelly             |
| 1/3             | Bridget           | 3/3             | Melissa           |
| 1/5             | Julie             | 3/5             | Louise            |
| 1/8             | Susan             | 3/6             | Melanie           |
| 1/10            | Pearl             | 3/10            | Eleanor           |
| 1/11            | Tracy             | 3/11            | Patrice           |
| 1/12            | Jasmine           | 3/12            | Sally             |
| 1/13            | Michelle          | 3/13            | Justine           |
| 1/14            | Pauline           | 3/14            | Lorraine          |
| 1/15            | Candice           | 3/15            | Miriam            |
| 1/16            | Hayley            | 3/16            | Jessica           |
| 1/17            | Lynette           | 3/17            | Denise            |
| 1/18            | Jennifer          | 3/19            | Penny             |
| 1/19            | Lisa              | 3/20            | Nadia             |
| 1/21            | Jane              | 3/21            | Zoe               |
| 1/24            | Belinda           | 3/22            | none              |
| 1/25            | Frances           | 3/23            | Vivienne          |
| 1/26            | Amy               | 3/24            | none              |
| 1/27            | Victoria          | 3/25            | Andrea            |
| 1/28            | Emily             | 3/26            | Linda             |
| 1/30            | Janice            | 3/27            | Ayesha            |
| 1/31            | Barbara           | 3/28            | Donna             |
|                 |                   | 3/30            | Mandy             |

### Appendix III

#### The interview schedules and the interviewing context

##### The interviews

The interviews took place during school-time and so their length (30 to 90 minutes) was mildly framed by the organisation of the school timetable; they were conducted in a variety of physical contexts and were tape-recorded. The schools could not always provide a quiet and private space for the interviews, and staff did not always see why this was important to us, teachers learn to live with interruptions and noise. Often no-one had a reliable overview of which spaces were in use by whom and when, especially at Wilhelma, which shared facilities with community organisations. The minor power politics of who had access to or control over the use of space was sometimes frustrating, especially at Sternrise. Dame's Trust presented fewest problems precisely because school life was well under central control.

The interview schedules and sampling procedures were devised by the writer. Of the total 139 interviews, 63% were conducted by the writer, the remainder by GAOC project research officers (30%) and postgraduate students (9%) taken on as occasional research assistants. The interviews were semi-structured. The schedules (reproduced below) listed a range of topics which should ideally be covered, but the ordering and the precise ways in which these were discussed were not specified. The intention was to approximate to an open-ended conversation in which the respondents felt comfortable to say (or not to say) what they thought and wished for themselves, knowing this information would not be passed on to teachers or peers. Some girls did talk amongst themselves about the interviews. Teachers were curious, and often asked what had been discussed or discovered, mainly because they sought insight into their pupils' situations. We never acceded to these requests, explaining the importance of confidentiality and anonymity. This (unintentionally)



lent the interviews an aura of secrecy and intimacy of theme they did not necessarily possess. Occasionally staff were suspicious, imagining that the researchers were interested in unearthing damning evidence about themselves and their classrooms. The girls often felt they were rather special, since not everyone in their form was interviewed. This helped the quality of rapport, especially in the follow-through study. We did want to convey that we took the girls and their views seriously, and that we did not take a judgemental or advisory stance. However, by the time of the third interview, many of the girls had come to see the researchers as detached and sympathetic, but also as potential *advisors* about how they should proceed in negotiating educational-occupational transitions. When girls asked us for information and advice, we offered what we could (after the interview had finished wherever possible), but underlined they should check with others before taking any decisions or action. The reality of interviewing as interaction *exchange* means that respondents' expectations of reciprocity cannot always, and arguably should not, be reasonably denied (cf. Oakley:1981; Chisholm,1984,1990a).

We explained in advance and at each interview to teachers and girls that taking part was their choice. What girls then thought (or were led to think by their teachers) was beyond our control. Teachers' desire to assist the project and the attraction for girls of missing a lesson were to our advantage in this respect. Only two girls from the original 61 were overtly unhappy and made it clear they did not want to be re-interviewed.

The quite frequent hesitations and pauses in response, especially in relation to topics with strong 'gender' links, show that it can be uncomfortable, and sometimes overtly distressing, for women and girls to confront their own oppression. Simply raising the issues of occupational segregation by sex or the division of labour in the family can be enough to expose felt conflicts. In this sense the interviews could be seen as

breaking a silence (see here Prendergast and Prout, 1980). A generalised 'belief in' equal opportunities is not at all the same thing as a recognition of gender oppression. Virtually all the girls in this study agreed with equal opportunities but they were not, they hastened to add, 'women's libbers'. These comments were typical:

It's all got too commercialised, it's like a publicity stunt. They've got all they need to get, really. They've got the vote for women and so on. Now it's up to each person....All these women who get together are just making fools of themselves, you get sick of them...(1/24, 1985)

I think some people go too far...you know the Greenham peace women? I think [pause] a lot of people, although they think it's a good thing to do [pause] in a way dislike them, because -I know my mother does - because she thinks about their families at home. Although it's good to get world peace and if they want to do it that's good, they're maybe pushing it a bit too far. And some of the women's lib people are really over the top. Sort of anti-male, in a way. And if you're saying that men and women should have equal choice, they should be equal, men shouldn't be underneath women just because women are underneath men at the moment in some ways. (1/25, 1986)

Not all respondents produce 'quotable quotes', and those who do may not necessarily be randomly distributed across a sample. In some studies, this may not matter; but we could still ask *whose utterances might have been excluded*. These girls differed not only in *what* they said, but also in *how much* they said and *how* they said it. The necessary corollary to this is that girls differed in what they did *not* voice, etc. Some respondents in this study provided transcripts of which the researcher dreams. It was more commonly necessary to piece together a range of fragments from various parts of the interviews; but I think this is actually usual, especially with girls as young as these were, and given that we were sometimes asking them to reflect on quite complex issues.

## The guiding schedules

### First interviews : 1984 : first and third year girls

#### *1. Family information and background*

Tell me something about.....yourself, your family, where you live

Leading to : interests/hobbies, liking for neighbourhood, parents' jobs (if hesitant re info, delay to 4, 5)

#### *2. Occupational choice history*

What was the first thing you can remember wanting to do? Reasons

Sequence and changes since then to now

Leading to : current thoughts and plans (aspirations vs expectations), ed/training needed and how any information here was obtained.

#### *3. Reasons for past and present occupational choices*

School : subject preferences, own judgement of general/subject specific achievement

If third-year girl : Option choice information - subjects chosen, reasons.

Personal qualities, interests

Family : parents'/kin hopes/views (look for sex differences)

Role models : prompt if necessary : teachers, family, friends, media; distinguish between specifically occupational and more general figures

#### *4. Local labour market*

Do people around where you live have the same/different kinds of job opportunities as people living in other parts of London/of the UK? Are jobs easier/harder to get here or elsewhere? What kind of jobs do people around here have? Where would you like to get a job - locally or elsewhere in London? Would you like to work in another part of the UK?

What kinds of jobs do girls/women get around here/elsewhere? Same/different from boys/men? Suppose you were a boy : would your chances of getting a job locally/elsewhere be the same or different? In what ways? Would your job choice (aspiration) be different from what you said earlier you want to be at the moment?

#### *5. Occupational segregation by sex*

Do women/men generally have the same/different kinds of jobs? Give me some examples (in either case). If different : reasons.

Which sex has the wider/narrower choice of jobs on the whole? Reasons.

#### Specific probes from interviewer :

(a) Suggest a few male-dominated manual trades (plumber, electrician, carpenter, etc.). Ask if these jobs are thought of as men's jobs, reasons; would girls have any problems if they wanted to have these kinds of jobs, reasons

(b) Repeat for scientific/technical jobs

(c) Are there other kinds of jobs that are especially thought of as for women or men?

(d) Does sex influence the kinds of jobs people want to do - for self, in general?

### 6. *Women and work, gender divisions*

Are women and men 'equal' as workers, i.e. pay, getting on, kinds of jobs, etc., or not? Reasons.

Leading to : connections between women as paid workers and women's family roles, division of roles and responsibilities at home by sex, ideas about marriage and children, etc.

Are things changing at all re women's position at work, in the family? Is there anything that ought to be changed? If so, how can these changes be best achieved?

### 7. *Overview*

Taking everything into consideration, do you think you're going to get the kind of job you want at the moment?

Reasons Is this particularly important to you, are there other things in life that are just as/more important?

Prompt where necessary : labour market/unemployment; prejudice/discrimination; future family roles

Anything else you think we've forgotten/ you'd like to say?

## Second interviews : 1985 : second and fourth year girls

### 1. *Schooling*

How are things going at the moment?

Academic progress, social integration; is 'school life' important to S, re friends, preferred activities, etc.; subject likes/dislikes and reasons

Probe : classroom atmosphere and pupil behaviour; T styles/relations with pupils; own sense of competence/achievement; gender dimensions of all these

---

If fourth year girl : Looking back, were options good/bad choices? Reasons

---

### 2. *Job choices*

Stability/change in aspirations and expectations since 1984. Reasons

Probe : widening/narrowing tendencies; changing interests; new knowledge about opportunities/constraints; advice/guidance/direction by teachers/parents/peers/others; changes in job/work status of parents/siblings since 1984

---

If fourth-year girl : Have the school subjects you've been doing this year given you new ideas or changed your ideas about what you want to do? How/why? Curriculum input on careers/ contact with careers officer or teacher? What does S think of these (content, usefulness, etc.)

---

### 3. *Labour market*

Perception of stability/change in extent/range of job opportunities locally/elsewhere since 1984 for adults/schoolleavers/girls and women in particular. Can S ground her views in any way?

---

If fourth-year girl : Have S's ideas here made any impact on her own plans for her future? Discuss current plans

re : leaving/staying on/going to college/getting a job/going on YTS. (Probe knowledge/attitudes to YTS)

---

#### 4. Gender

(a) Set context : we are very interested in job choices, but we know that paid work is only one part of life, there's also family life, friends, hobbies, leisure, etc. So : How does paid work fit into S's picture of her future life? Locate this topic around family and community roles, and only gradually focus down onto gender divisions/relations (if S does not herself do so)

(b) Be alert to (and pursue if appropriate) the following issues : chinks in unreflexivity; sex-linked attributes/activities, especially power/authority; positive evaluation of 'feminine' attributes and women's roles/power; sense of belonging to a (class) cultural community; refusal to recognise/acknowledge gender divisions at work, in the home; feelings of constraint vs feelings of opportunity; anxiety of/desire to abandon(ing) 'conventional-ity'; escapism/fantasy futures; contradictory responses; ways out of gender-linked dilemmas re life plans.

(c) Return to paid work and own future : Taking everything into consideration, do you think you will get the kind of job/ future you'd like for yourself? Reasons Anything else we've forgotten/you'd like to say?

### Third interviews : 1986 : Third and fifth year girls

#### 1. Schooling and job choices

General academic progress, social integration (S's view)

- school a 'central life interest'? If not, what is (outside interests, etc.)?

Probe if appropriate : fashion/clothes/cosmetics/music (i.e. teenage culture of femininity involvement)

- subject likes/dislikes, reasons and changes since 1985

---

If **third-year girl** : option choices : which subjects, why, how decisions were arrived at (whose/any advice?)

Prompt if necessary : current aspirations/expectations, labour market chances, gender issues

---

If **fifth-year girl** : upcoming exams : which are being taken? when/how were the decisions made? Felt prospects of results. Response/interest of significant others. Peer/friend comparisons - how are they doing relative to S (in her view)?

In retrospect : were option choices the 'right' ones or not? Reasons. Have experiences with subjects followed through to now changed S's ideas on what she wants to do, or suggested new ideas to her?

Does S see her 'school career' so far as having been in any way unusual or exceptional, e.g. in comparison with friends, family members, 'typical' pupils at her school? How/why?

---

Probe : classroom atmosphere and pupil behaviour; T styles/relations with pupils; own sense of competence/achievement; gender dimensions of all these

Stability/change in aspirations and expectations since 1985. Reasons

Probe : widening/narrowing tendencies; changing interests; new knowledge about opportunities/constraints; advice/guidance/direction by teachers/parents/peers/others; changes in job/work status of parents/siblings since 1985

---

If fifth-year girl : Curriculum input on careers/ contact with careers officer or teacher? What does S think of these (content, usefulness, etc.)

## 2. Transitions

Plans to leave/stay on after 16 : what is planned/desired/expected? Reasons and influences (parents, teachers, peers, etc.)

If fifth-year girl : Explore in detail :

School/family pressures/influences to leave/stay on/follow a particular FE course or take a particular kind of job. S's perception or real opportunities for her. What especially attracts S to leaving/staying on? Under what circumstances would she change her mind? What are peers'/friends' plans? How far is it important to her to remain in the locality/in London? Are plans in any way linked to personal life plans (e.g. boyfriend...)?

What use is 'education' in moving into employment and adult life? How? What kinds of qualifications are useful/not useful? What would S most like school to be about, what would she like to learn about and why? Is school the best place to learn these things?

Are girls'/boys' experiences different when they move from school/college to employment/adult life?

How does S see her own future unfolding : desires/expectations/pressures

If fifth-year girl : Explore in detail :

Fears/hopes for 'life after 16'; are S's aspirations/expectations similar to/different from what family/friends have done/want; what differences will it make if S does not manage to fulfill her immediate/longer term plans?

Domestic responsibilities : what do parents expect S (siblings?) to do at present in the house? Will this change after leaving school/etc.? How do parents divide household tasks between them? Reasons (in S's view) Any disagreements over who should do what and how much? Project into own future - what would S like/expect to see in this area for herself? Discuss women as paid workers and as family workers, interrelations between the two (if appropriate)

Probe : sense of control over own life; people's power to change things for themselves and for others; what are acceptable lifestyles (as opposed to possible ones); S's 'alternative' scenarios; what are the best ways for girls/women to get what they want in life.

Taking everything into consideration, does S think she will get the kind of job/future she wants for herself? Reasons. Anything else we've forgotten/you'd like to say? Ask me?

## Appendix IV

### The survey instruments

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#### JOB LISTS

We want to see how many different jobs your group can think of, so please do not ask your neighbours what they're writing.

Don't worry about spelling - just write the name of a job as you think it's spelt.

#### WAIT UNTIL WE ASK YOU TO BEGIN BEFORE BEGINNING TO WRITE!

Write down the names of the first ten jobs you can think of here

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

Good. But don't turn over the page until we ask you to do so!

---

**PART 1**

All these questions ask you something about the kinds of jobs you might do when you leave school or college

1. Please write into the table below the names of the job/jobs you would most like to have when you start work - the spaces are on the left hand side. Then write into the boxes beside each job the answers to the questions about them - these questions are written along the top of the table.

You do not have to write in more than one job if you only have one choice.

|    | Which subjects do you have to study to get this job? | What certificates or training do you need to get this job? | Can you say why you would like this job? |
|----|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1. |                                                      |                                                            |                                          |
| 2. |                                                      |                                                            |                                          |
| 3. |                                                      |                                                            |                                          |

If you have more than three jobs which you would most like to do, write in here what the others are :

---



---



---

Are any of the jobs you've mentioned your first choice? If so, write its name in here :

---



2. Sometimes people change their minds about the jobs they'd like.

Please write in the names of any jobs you have thought you'd like to do, but not any longer.

Please tell us why you changed your mind, if you can.

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3. We've been asking you so far what you'd most like to be - but what might really happen?

3.1 What job/jobs do you think you'll really get when you start work?

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3.2 Was your answer different from what you said you'd most like to be in question 1?

If it was, tell us why you think you won't get the job/jobs you want.

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3.3 Let's suppose that you get the job you'd most like to have.

Imagine that you are now 40 years old, and a success at work.

Please tell us exactly what you are doing at work now.

---

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---

---

**PART 2**

These questions ask you something about other people's jobs.

1. Write below the types of jobs you think people at your school or who live in your neighbourhood get when they leave school.  
One list is for boys and the other for girls, but if you think girls and boys get the same jobs, tell us and just write one list.

| These are the jobs GIRL schoolleavers get around here | These are the jobs BOY schoolleavers get around here |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                       |                                                      |

2. Now think about the grown-ups that you know.  
Write in the names of the jobs they have and make sure you put them in the right spaces.

Examples : Your aunt is a police officer. You put 'police officer' in the space for family and relatives who are women.

The man next door is a lorry driver. You put 'lorry driver' in the space for people who live nearby who are men.

Your mother's friend used to work in a clothes factory, but now she's unemployed. You put 'clothes factory (unemployed)' in the space for other grown-ups you know who are women.

| Jobs that my FAMILY or RELATIVES have |     | Jobs that PEOPLE LIVING NEARBY have |     |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------|-----|
| WOMEN                                 | MEN | WOMEN                               | MEN |
|                                       |     |                                     |     |
| Jobs that OTHER GROWN-UPS I know have |     |                                     |     |
| WOMEN                                 |     | MEN                                 |     |
|                                       |     |                                     |     |

## Appendix V

### The working universe of occupations

#### *1. Occupations staffed predominantly by women*

|                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| actress                           | maid                                |
| air hostess/stewardess            | Marks & Spencers shop assistant     |
| babysitter/childminder            | making beds                         |
| /looking after kids               | midwife                             |
| bank assistant/clerk              | model                               |
| barmaid                           | nanny                               |
| beautician                        | nurse                               |
| cafe work                         | nursery nurse                       |
| cashier                           | policewoman                         |
| cleaning lady/cleaner/cleaning up | polishing lady                      |
| cooking                           | receptionist                        |
| dancer                            | secretary                           |
| dental nurse                      | switchboard operator                |
| dinnerlady                        | /telephonist                        |
| dogmaid/kennelmaid                | typist                              |
| dressmaker                        | TV camerawoman                      |
| dusting                           | waitress/silver service waitress    |
| fashion shop assistant            | washing-up lady                     |
| firewoman                         | doing the washing/laundry worker    |
| hairdresser                       | /launderette                        |
| headmistress                      | working with old/handicapped people |
| home help/meals on wheels         | WREN                                |
| housekeeper                       |                                     |
| housewife                         | N = 45 jobs                         |
| lollipop lady                     |                                     |
| machinist                         |                                     |

## 2. Occupations majority-staffed by women

|                              |                             |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| bookkeeper                   | interpreter                 |
| clothes maker                | librarian                   |
| computer worker (data input) | office worker / clerk       |
| cook                         | physiotherapist             |
| curtain shop                 | teacher                     |
| dog helper, stable hand      | toilet keeper               |
| food process worker          | shop assistant (no details) |

N = 14 jobs

---

## 3. Neither predominantly female nor male staffed

|                                                                      |                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| actor                                                                | shoe shop assistant    |
| artist                                                               | singer                 |
| astrologer                                                           | social worker          |
| careers officer                                                      | stall holder           |
| caterer                                                              | swimmer, tennis player |
| civil servant                                                        | TV person              |
| corner/local shop assistant                                          | tour guide             |
| /shopkeeper (e.g. sweet shop,<br>newsagent, sub-post office, grocer) | traffic warden         |
| council worker                                                       | travel agent           |
| draper                                                               | window dresser         |
| film star                                                            | writer/author          |
| fish and chip shop                                                   |                        |
| newsreader                                                           | N = 25 jobs            |
| pet shop                                                             |                        |
| restaurant worker                                                    |                        |

---

#### 4. Occupations majority staffed by men

|                           |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| archaeologist             | personnel manager       |
| bus conductor             | pharmacist              |
| chiropodist               | pop musician            |
| cleaning the car          | prison warden           |
| computer operator         | publican                |
| computer programmer       | shop manager            |
| designer/fashion designer | tax collector           |
| doctor                    | taxidermist             |
| factory worker            | zookeeper               |
| film director             | zoologist               |
| furrier                   | animal medical research |
| journalist/reporter       |                         |
| manager/area manager      | N = 23 jobs             |
| optician                  |                         |

---

#### 5. Occupations predominantly staffed by men

|                          |                       |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| AA services              | chef                  |
| accountant               | coalman               |
| ambulance driver         | computer researcher   |
| architect                | customs officer       |
| astronaut                | deliveryman/deliverer |
| baker                    | dentist               |
| bank manager             | director              |
| barman                   | diver                 |
| boxer                    | docker                |
| bricklayer               | driver (unspecified)  |
| builder                  | driving instructor    |
| bus driver/coach driver  | dustman               |
| businessman              | electrician           |
| butcher                  | engineer              |
| butler                   | estate agent          |
| cameraman                | farmer                |
| caretaker                | fireman               |
| carpenter                | fisherman             |
| carpetlayer/carpetfitter | fishmonger            |
| chauffeur                | footballer/cricketer  |

|                                 |                                  |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| foreman                         | roofer                           |
| furnituremaker                  | sailor                           |
| gardener                        | sales rep                        |
| gasman/LEB/Telecom              | scaffolder                       |
| gravedigger                     | schoolkeeper                     |
| guard/bouncer                   | scientist                        |
| headmaster                      | shoemaker/repairer/cobbler       |
| horse trainer                   | skipper/ship driver              |
| insurance man                   | soldier/army                     |
| jockey                          | space researcher                 |
| judge                           | sports coach/swimming instructor |
| lawyer/solicitor/barrister      | storesman                        |
| lorry driver                    | surgeon/brain surgeon            |
| lorry loader                    | surveyor                         |
| manufacturer                    | tailor                           |
| mechanic                        | taxi driver                      |
| Member of Parliament/politician | technician                       |
| milkman                         | technical engineer               |
| miner                           | train driver                     |
| minicab controller              | stationman/railwayman            |
| newspaper seller                | vet                              |
| officer (police, armed forces)  | waiter                           |
| painter                         | waste disposal                   |
| pilot                           | welder                           |
| plumber                         | window cleaner/washing windows   |
| police/fuzz/policeman           | workman                          |
| police dog handler              |                                  |
| postman                         |                                  |
| priest/vicar                    |                                  |
| Prime Minister                  | N = 99 jobs                      |
| printer                         |                                  |
| professor                       |                                  |
| psychiatrist                    |                                  |
| record maker                    |                                  |
| roadsweeper                     |                                  |
| roadworker                      |                                  |

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*Unable to agree on a coding*

|                    |                           |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| doing homework     | work in a hotel           |
| making things jobs | working at Lloyd Register |
| instructor         |                           |
| clinic worker      | N = 6 jobs                |

Appendix VI : A map of girl's aspirations (interview sample)

|              |           |                                    | 1                                                                                                                                        | 2                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 3                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------|-----------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| purity       | morality  | regulators<br>(respectability)     | SECRETARY 2<br>BANK CLERK<br>receptionist<br>data input clerk<br><i>foreign exchange<br/>in bank</i>                                     | 5 SECRETARY<br>bank clerk<br>travel agency<br>POLICEWOMAN 3<br>TEACHER 2<br>WRENS<br>2 POLICEWOMAN<br>3 TEACHER<br><i>dance school<br/>shipbroking admin</i>                                                  | LAWYER<br>JOURNALIST<br>WRITER<br>coroner<br>forensic scientist<br>space research<br>archaeologist<br>barrister, lawyer<br>journalist<br>scientific biologist<br>SCIENTIST<br>pathologist<br>accountant |
| production   | economy   | executors<br>(service)             | waitress<br><i>cook/chef</i><br>SALES ASSISTANT<br>bus driver/conductor<br>machinist<br>building site<br>pottery factory<br>factory work | shopkeeper<br>mechanic<br>computers<br>dressmaker<br>baker/confectioner<br>recording studio<br>electrician<br>computerwork<br><i>painting/decorating</i><br>cabbie<br>lab technician<br>photographer<br>model | interpreter<br>engineering                                                                                                                                                                              |
| pollution    | sexuality | attractors<br>(physical<br>beauty) | AIR HOSTESS<br>HAIRDRESSER 10<br>4 HAIRDRESSER                                                                                           | MODEL                                                                                                                                                                                                         | ACTRESS<br>DANCER 3<br>designer<br>pilot<br>singer<br>film star<br>pro sports*<br>2 DANCER<br>DESIGNER<br>singer                                                                                        |
| reproduction | family    | caretakers<br>(nurturance)         | NURSERY NURSE/T.2<br>3 NURSERY<br>NURSE/T<br>old people's home<br>dog handler                                                            | NURSE 3<br>infant teacher<br>5 NURSE<br><i>ambulance service</i>                                                                                                                                              | VET<br>vet<br>doctor<br>psychiatrist                                                                                                                                                                    |

PLAIN : multiple mentions, first named asps.  
 BOLD : multiple mentions, second/alt. asps.

plain : first asps mentioned once only  
 bold : second asps. mentioned once only

\* geog., music, PE,  
 language, drama

\* footballer  
 athlete

*Italics : asps of some kind arising  
 by 1986, additional categories to  
 those listed for 1984*

## Appendix VII

### Episode cards : an exemplar set

#### Community embeddedness

1/5/1

Julie, like her two elder sisters (J., 5th, and S., 3rd year [also in interview sample]), attends W. school, which she positively likes. Julie's father is half-Norwegian on his father's side, but he has lived on the Island all his life. She was in Norway as a baby to visit; none of the family speak the language, so connections are distant. Julie has relatives in London and Aylesbury and an aunt in Malta. She likes living in the locality, **"it's nice and quiet, you hardly get any cars here, it's peaceful"**. She has friends here too; she would not like to move anywhere else **"not even to Norway!"**. Julie and her family are great collectors - she collects rubbers (got the idea from a friend), her sister S. and her father collect stones. Otherwise she likes reading; she mentions comics like Bunt and Judy.

She, like her sister, would like to work in the West End - perceived as busy with people enjoying themselves: **"walking round looking at the shops"**. But she'd prefer to work locally, **"the people are nice"**, but then she's not been elsewhere to compare. When asked whether she'd move away from London to get a job, she replied: **"I don't know - there's not many houses round here, so you'd have to move away"** but was firm that she doesn't actually want to move away at all.

#### Family employment & occupation

1/5/1

Julie's father is a carpenter (he is employed by a sub-contractor).

Her mother has been a dinner lady at W. school for six years now, though at present she's trying to get a job as a home help. She no longer enjoys her job **"because the kids swear at you and make a mess in the dining-room"**. She has always had a job as far as Julie can remember, but has had many different ones - working in a sweet factory, in an office, production checker in a wine bottling factory. The frequent job changes are connected with bouts of chronic heart trouble, leading to fainting and hospital stays.

Julie's eldest sister J., in the 5th year, is looking for a job - is prepared to take anything she can find - and will leave school as soon as she has found one; she will only stay on if she doesn't find anything. (In fact she did leave school before Easter; two years later in 1986, S., the second sister and also in the interview sample, similarly left at Easter, having been a heavy non-attender in her 5th year.) J.'s boyfriend (age 19) helps out intermittently at his uncle's garage - he hasn't been able to find a job since leaving school.



## Main felt constraints

1/5/1

The main constraints Julie perceives are, firstly, the scarcity of job opportunities, which she sees as a general problem but experientially as a problem in the locality. Secondly, Julie sees women as disadvantaged on the labour market, but only partly because of the gender stereotypes about competence and suitability for particular occupations - women themselves have less 'ambition', are more timid in searching out opportunities.

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## Occupational aspiration history

1/5/1

1. Air hostess : she flew to Malta on holiday to visit her aunt a couple of years ago, and thought it would be fun, but Julie has problems with her ears, so had to give up the idea. (It's a family problem, both her father and a sister have had ear operations.) This was her first and only flight; otherwise she has only travelled as a baby on a boat to Norway.

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## Labour market picture

1/5/1

Julie thinks it's very difficult to find jobs at all these days, as she knows from her sister's and her boyfriend's experience. But she doesn't see the locality as distinctive in labour market structure terms; local people can work in an office in the West End, just as anyone else can. Basically, what Carole means is that there are few jobs locally, so most people **"have to travel a long way to get a job - up the West End or somewhere"**. She cannot explain why there are so few jobs locally, except to say that the Island isn't that big, there are lots of houses on it but few shops. When asked what kinds of jobs local people actually have, Carole could only respond with information about her mother, who's had lots of different jobs. After long pauses, Carole was able to say that boy schoolleavers usually get jobs in offices or as postmen; girls as secretary or working in a shop - but she doesn't know why this is (cf. Gendered d of I)

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## Current aspirations/expectations

1/5/1

Julie is equally interested in becoming a policewoman or a hairdresser; her second choice would be perhaps nurse. Her reasons are because she would like to help people; she cannot give any further reasons for the policewoman aspiration, she knows no-one who is in this job. Her eldest sister J. is good at cutting hair, so Julie thought if her sister can do this, she can too.

To be a policewoman Julie thinks you have to be fit; to be a nurse you have to go to college to learn how to give medicine; otherwise she has no idea about training and qualifications for any of her choices. However, of the three, it would be easier to become a hairdresser **"because there's lots of hairdressing salons around here...[eagerly]and up the West End"**. (Interesting : the question had asked about access in terms of qualifications, etc., but she interpreted it in terms of perception of concrete job opportunities.)

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**Significant others : aspirations****1/5/1**

Julie has a close relationship with her mother and talks with her a lot about school and her homework - she usually asks her sisters for help as they've done it all before. But they do not talk about what Julie would like to be when she's older, her mother doesn't ask her about this. She is not aware that her parents have any ideas or preferences as to what they'd like her to be when she's older, and they've never said anything to her in this respect.

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**Advice/Information resources****1/5/1**

Julie's mother advises her always to go and ask the teacher for help if she finds herself stuck with her work, rather than sitting in the classroom and doing nothing; Julie says she takes this advice. Her neighbour, who works in a factory as a secretary, helps Julie when she gets stuck with her homework and her Mum doesn't know what to advise - **"she knows all about it 'cos she's 'ad to go all the way through, has to do it all the time when she's at work"**.

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**Significant others/Role models****1/5/1**

Julie can think of no-one at first. After prompting her that she likes her Mum a lot, Julie paused and then said firmly that she likes her Dad (just because he's her Dad) and her next-door neighbour, who helps her with her homework on occasion, and who Julie sees having had more education (she's a secretary).

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**Orientation to education****1/5/1**

Julie likes her school; it has a friendly atmosphere and she has friends here. Her favourite lessons are Integrated Studies (i.e. combined humanities for the lower school at W.), which she simply enjoys, and maths, which she is good at. She finds the learning context more interesting than at primary school. She doesn't like French much, she'd rather learn Norwegian or Maltese (family connections). She's been to France and doesn't like it, doesn't want to go there again. Otherwise there's nothing she really dislikes. Julie has great difficulty considering how what she learns at school might be useful for or linked with work in general or particular occupations; after much thought she suggests maths would be useful for a secretary who has to do the accounts.

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## Gendered D of L in production/reproduction

1/5/1

In searching for reasons why girls and boys go into different jobs, she can only say, after pauses, that **"It depends on what they're good at.....[pause]....If they like it, they might like serving in a shop"**. The sexes simply have different interests, so **"boys usually like getting jobs which are interesting - [quickly correcting herself] girls like getting jobs like that, too, but there isn't many jobs like that for girls....Boys usually move around a lot trying to get jobs in different places of the world, but the girls like to settle down in one place"**. Julie thinks she is like that, too. In general she responds immediately that men have a wider choice of jobs than do women - they can be carpenters (her father), postmen, printers, milkman; but women **"have to be, have to stick after jobs like homewife or..working in a shop. Men get out and do more things....I think men have more ambitions"**. Later, in characterising scientific/technical jobs as also dominated by men, she returns to this as an explanation, but adds that intergenerational occupational inheritance plays a role - sons follow fathers, daughters follow mothers. Also, part of what Julie means by ambitions has to do with what she sees as women's timidity in approaching employers and asking for jobs; she offers the example of her sister, who has to be encouraged by her boyfriend to go in and ask. Carole is unable to suggest what she might want to be were she a boy. Prompted with the specific examples of her own aspirations to be a policewoman or a hairdresser, she responded after a long pause that she didn't think a boy would want to be a nurse [with a giggle]. But she refused to offer any reasons for this - eventually suggested it was the sight of blood, and after much hesitation added :  
[6secs] **"Don't know...[pause]...maybe it's because boys...[6secs]... usually just say they'll leave it there, just go off and do something else, but girls stick to it, would do it"**. She expanded on this with the example of fights : girls start fewer, but fight more seriously when they do.

Julie thinks men usually do male-typed manual jobs, though women can if they try hard enough. Her interpretation of women's difficulties at first focussed on their competence : **"You don't usually see a woman going round with a bag of tools carrying it all day"**. She was initially unwilling to delve further, but then when asked what she would say about girls wanting to take such jobs, she replied at once in a tone of positive resistance:

**"I say let 'em go and do it!"**

Q : Would she be able to become this?

[subdued tone] **"Yes, if she worked hard enough"**

Q : Would she have to work harder than a boy?

**"Yeah...because, say you went to work in a place where they take plumbers on and that....[6secs]...when a boy goes in and asks for a job they say alright, but if a girl goes in they usually [emphatically] hesitate and usually end up not getting it"**

Q : How do you know this happens?

[subdued tone] **"I don't really, I'm just guessing."**

Employers think girls give up half-way through, but Julie says this is unfair, as girls do stick to things (cf above). The solution is **"To show the men that we can stick to it and that they're the ones who don't"**.

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**Gender/Class divisions:  
awareness and consciousness****1/5/1**

Julie is certainly aware of class divisions insofar as she knows unemployment levels are high, she recognises occupational status divisions (viz. neighbour being educated and a secretary), and she characterises the West End and working there as something desirable/special. However, this awareness is not a consciously reflective one. Julie is aware of gender divisions in production and reproduction, but she is unsure what the reasons for these are - she shifts undecidedly between gender-linked competence (probably strength), personality characteristics, male prejudice and employer discrimination. Interestingly she refers to intergenerational inheritance of gendered locations, both in production and reproduction spheres; Julie is attached to her female kin, affectively and as potential role models. Characteristic is the way in which she avoids looking behind the world as it presents itself, but then intermittently cannot prevent herself from acknowledging aspects of patriarchal relations, i.e. moving beyond the conventionally acceptable models she has learned to explain that world. She also has a rather distanced relation to education - she likes school, but education does not figure prominently in either constraints or facilitators in shaping her future.

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